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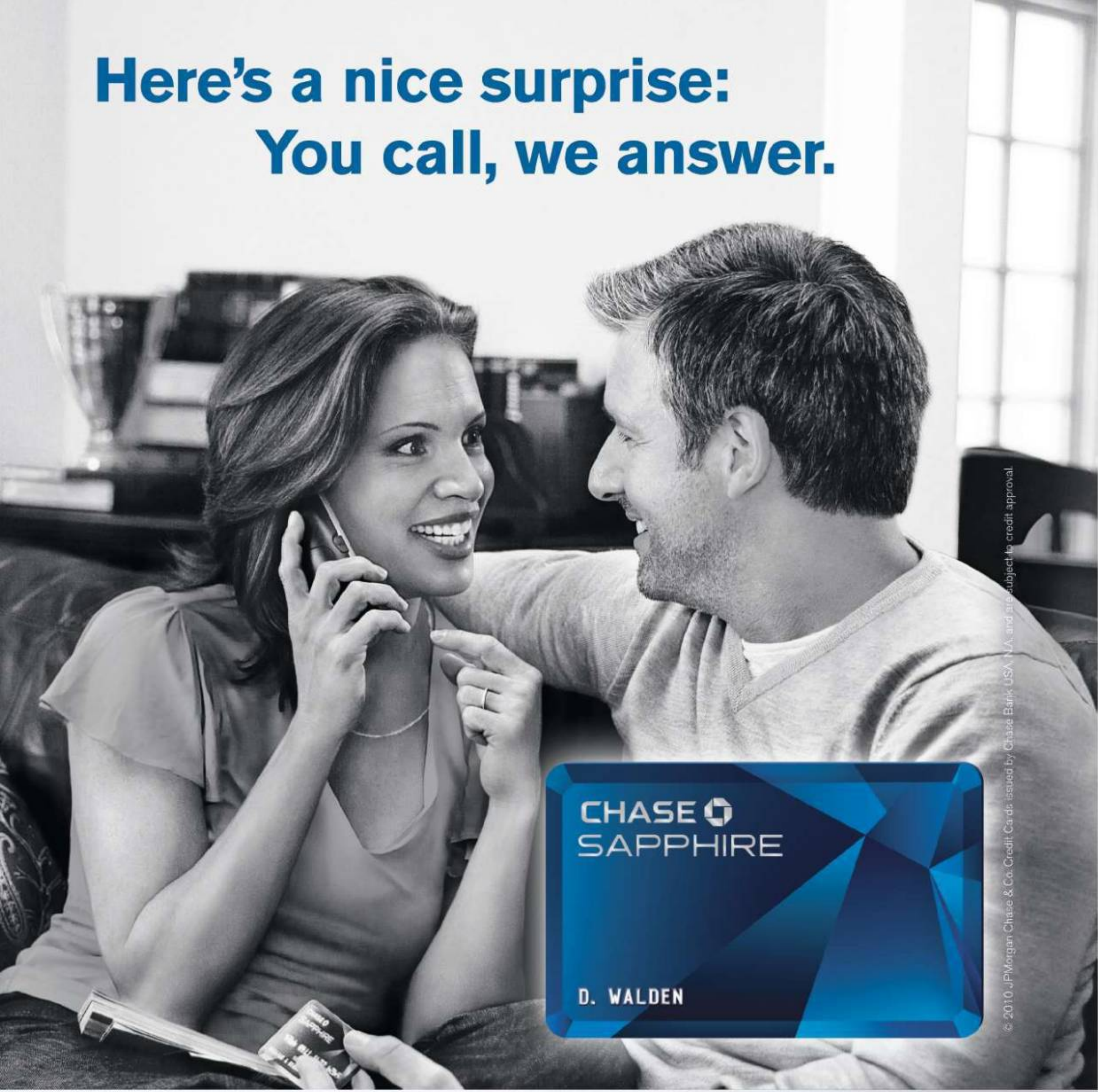

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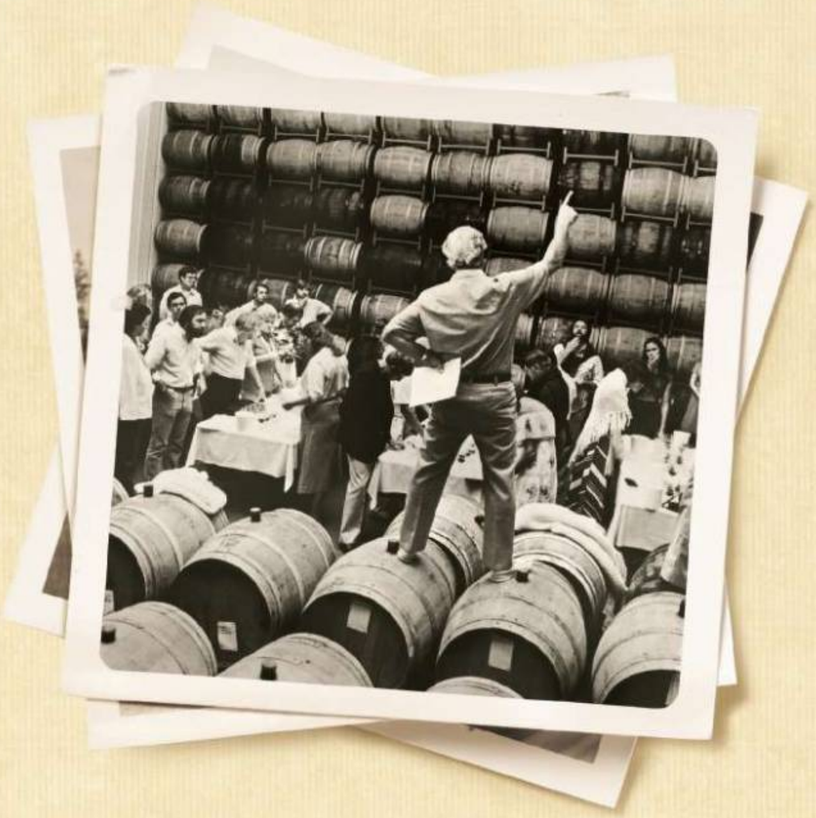

He spent decades researching the right wood for his wine barrels.

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Robert Mondavi believed that finesse and care were equal ingredients to the grapes themselves. At the time, people thought him a bit obsessive. Which is the very same reason people drink Woodbridge by Robert Mondavi today.

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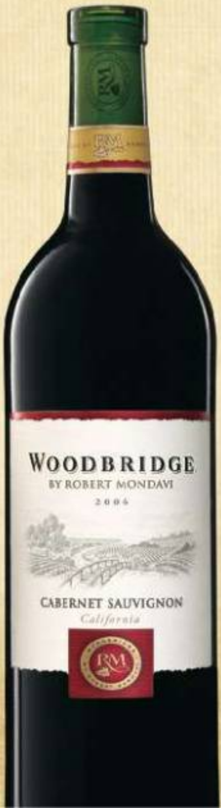
by Robert Mondavi



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As CEO of Tesla Motors, Elon Musk knows California's open roads like the back of his hand. Elon is always thinking about what may be the next green option for his electric sports car company. But he also has another devotion—enjoying quality time with his kids, including visits to some of California's best amusement parks and beaches. Find out more about Elon Musk and his favorite things to do in California at visit**california**.com/elon

5 California FIVES

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FIRST

The Roman Way

An education in the simple pleasures of pasta and life

I'VE NEVER LIVED in Rome, the city that writer Anya von Bremzen pays tribute to in our feature "Eternal Pleasures" (page 42), but for a few blissful months back in 1994, I ate the famed Roman dish *spaghetti alla carbonara* day in and day out. This was before my husband, Lindsay, and I were married, long before we had any clear ideas about what we wanted to do with our lives, but, in our early twenties, we'd somehow had the good sense to move to Italy. We settled in Perugia, an Umbrian hill town about 100 miles north of Rome, and enrolled in a government-run (read: cheap) language school. We couldn't afford to eat out much, so, during the afternoon, when the whole city shut down for a three-hour siesta, we'd have a leisurely lunch on the terrace of our one-room apartment. We ate pasta like it was going out of style.

Spaghetti alla carbonara was our house favorite. We'd encountered the silky, smoky-tasting dish at a little trattoria during one of our weekend daytrips to Rome, and I found myself obsessing over how something this delicious could be made with just eggs, cheese, dried pasta, and a little cured pork, ingredients that, no matter how bare our cupboards, we always had around. I didn't have any English-language cookbooks with me (and this was before the Internet), so I improvised, often adding a bit of white wine or cream to help smooth out the sauce. (Eventually I figured out how to do this with just the eggs, cheese, and a little pasta water.) We fell into a rhythm of making *spaghetti alla carbonara* for lunch most days, along with a big salad; after our meal, we'd take a nap and then leap back into our day, our bodies and spirits miraculously restored. Now I was sure I knew the secret to the Romans' famous zest for living, to the frenetic, joyful energy that pervades their city. I credited it all to the carbonara.

A recipe for *spaghetti alla carbonara* in a 1967 cookbook, *Le Ricette Regionali Italiane* (Solares).

As much as I loved the dish, I knew precious little about it. It wasn't until years later, when I started spending more time in Rome, that I learned it was just one of many similarly humble but glorious dishes comprising the city's *cucina povera*, or peasant cooking. (For a history of carbonara, see "Roman Art," in the March 2007 issue of SAVEUR, or read the article at www.saveur.com/romanart.) I also learned that I was hardly alone in my devotion to carbonara; in fact, the *New Yorker* writer Calvin Trillin loved *spaghetti alla carbonara* so much that he wrote an essay about it for that magazine; in it, he argued that it should replace turkey on Thanksgiving. I don't know if I'd go that far, but after witnessing the rest of the SAVEUR staff swoon over the dish, whipped up in our test kitchen using a traditional Roman recipe, I'd say we could all use a little carbonara in our lives. —*DANA BOWEN, Executive Editor*

New in FARE This month's Fare section, which begins on page 13, has a few new additions. On page 20 you'll find the first installment of our 5 to Try column, a roundup of great food-world finds (this month: online culinary courses). And in Just Ask (page 18), we answer a reader's burning question (in this issue, the scoop on a South African sandwich). Stay tuned for other new Fare features in upcoming issues.

TODD COLEMAN

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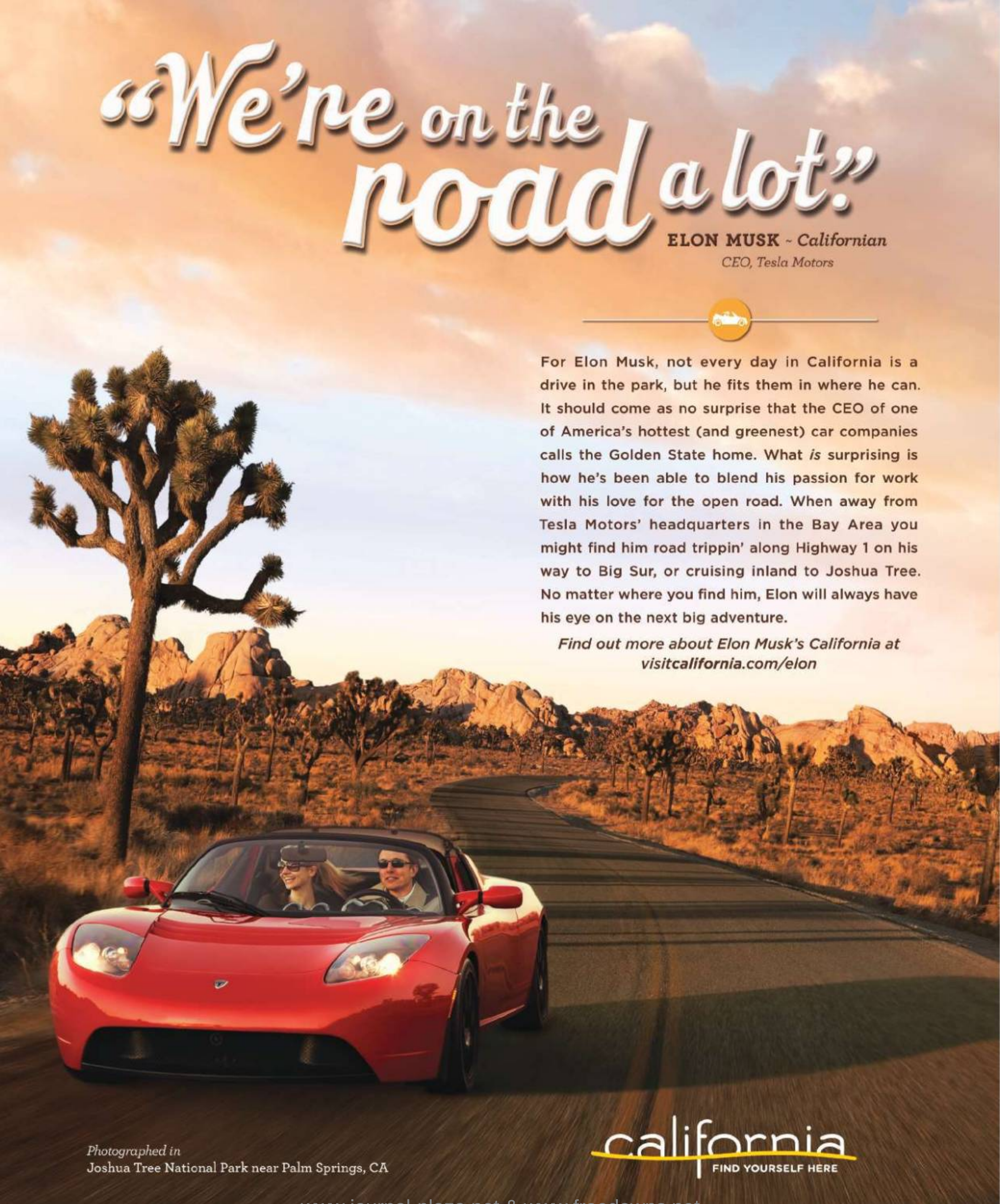

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FARE

Objects and Obsessions from the World of Food, plus Agenda and More

Fantastic Plastic

A kitchenware maker keeps up with the times

LAST FALL MY friend Melissa Easton, a Brooklyn-based industrial designer, got a call from Susan Perkins, the vice president of worldwide design at Tupperware. As tidily as its bowls stacked up, Perkins told Easton, Tupperware hadn't yet devised a way to store the lids. So Easton came up with the Keep Tabs containers, which nest with their lids on, like Russian dolls. Available in sizes as small as five ounces, Keep Tabs was an instant hit in countries like Mexico and Uruguay where kitchens are small and every bit of saved food counts. It turns out that it's just one of 135 new products that the Orlando, Florida–based company released last year, many of them—like the reusable Eco by Tupperware Water Bottle—designed for both space-saving and conservation. It got me thinking about the Tupperware my siblings and I grew up with in the 1960s—Snack Storers, Pie Wedges, Ice Tups for popsicles—all highly practical in a household with four kids, all (like the 28 items pictured above, representing 64 years of design) reflective of their era. Ever since Earl Tupper introduced his polyethylene Bell Tumbler in 1946, followed by the lidded Wonderlier Bowl, Tupperware designs have captured America's culinary zeitgeist: the Dip 'N Serve Tray and TV Tumblers of the 1950s, television's golden age; the Tortilla Keeper from the jet-set, globalizing 1960s; the microwave-ready TupperWave of the 1970s; and so on. All the while, Tupperware has also made products that reflect the needs of home cooks beyond the 50 states: CheeSmart ventilated cheese storers for Europe, Bento Boxes for Japan, and, most recently, the Nature Nano water filter for China. But ask Susan Perkins which of Tupperware's 5,000 designs she likes best, and she returns to the enduring Wonderlier. "It's functional and pretty. I like that about our products; they don't all have to change." —*Betsy Andrews*

JON WHITTLE (16); TODD COLEMAN (12)

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Waiter Tourne Folkes with Blue Ribbon's fried chicken dinner, above.

TODD COLEMAN (2)

Prize Chicken

A new book reveals a restaurant's secrets

When Bruce and Eric Bromberg, both graduates of the Cordon Bleu cooking school in Paris and veterans of professional kitchens, opened their restaurant Blue Ribbon Brasserie in Manhattan in 1992, the brothers wanted to combine the conviviality of a late-night Paris brasserie with the comforts of American diners. The menu they came up with was both egalitarian and eclectic, featuring everything from paella and pupu platters to matzo ball soup and foie gras. "We were basically serving great versions of our best food memories," says Bruce. The place was a hit, and the brothers went on to open eight more spots; they're some of my favorite restaurants in the city. So, I was happy to see that the restaurateurs have just come out with the *Bromberg Bros. Blue Ribbon Cookbook* (Clarkson Potter, March 2010). I knew the book would be a solid collection of classic dishes—and, with recipes for salt-and-pepper shrimp and hanger steak with caramelized onions, it certainly is—but I also hoped I'd learn the secrets behind my favorite Blue Ribbon dish: their "Northern" fried chicken. That entrée, served with mashed potatoes and collard greens, is one of the best versions of the classic meal I've tasted: crisp and juicy chicken, bursting with tingly spice and served with honey for dipping; surpassingly silky mashed potatoes; and collard greens that are tangy and crunchy, not soggy. The book did not disappoint; in it, the Brombergs reveal how they devised each component (see the boxes at left) of this delicious dinner. —*Todd Coleman*

A Tupperware gallery and a recipe for browned butter collard greens at SAVEUR.COM/ISSUE128

NORTHERN FRIED CHICKEN

SERVES 4

Bruce and Eric Bromberg's fried chicken boasts extra-crunchy skin thanks to a matzo meal crust.

- **Canola oil, for frying**
- **½ tsp. hot paprika**
- **⅛ tsp. each cayenne pepper, dried basil, dried parsley, garlic powder, and onion powder**
- **4 egg whites, beaten**
- **½ cup flour**
- **½ cup matzo meal**
- **¼ tsp. baking powder**
- **1 3-lb. chicken, cut into 8 pieces**
- **Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste**
- **Honey, for dipping**

Pour oil to a depth of 2" in a 5-qt. Dutch oven. Heat over medium-high heat until a deep-fry thermometer reads 375°. Combine paprika, cayenne, basil, parsley, and garlic and onion powders in a bowl; set aside. Put egg whites into a bowl. Combine flour, matzo, and baking powder in another bowl. Working with one piece at a time, dip chicken in egg whites and press into matzo to coat. Shake off excess; transfer chicken to a rack set inside a baking sheet. Working in 2 batches, fry chicken until crispy and cooked through, 10–12 minutes. Transfer chicken to paper towels and season with salt, pepper, and the reserved paprika mixture. Serve with honey, if you'd like.

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King of Candy

Turning sesame seeds into a beloved treat

AT THIS TIME OF year, the Joyva Corporation, a New York City confectionary company founded in 1907 by a Ukrainian immigrant named Nathan Radutzky, does a brisk business in Jell Rings, Cherry Twists, and other candies labeled "kosher for Passover." Joyva's halvah doesn't carry that label—it's made from seeds, which many Jews of Eastern European descent consider to be forbidden during the holiday—but the fudgelike sesame confection, which dates back to biblical times, is nevertheless a beloved Passover treat among Sephardic Jews of Western European and Middle Eastern descent. And throughout the rest of the year, Joyva sells as much halvah as all its other candies combined. Today, the company, run by Nathan's grandson, Richard (above), produces, on average, 38,000 pounds of the sweet, nutty treat every week in the Brooklyn factory that Nathan built.

In one part of the facility, sesame seeds are soaked, shelled, rinsed, roasted, and crushed to make the paste known as tahini, halvah's distinctive component. (Joyva imports more sesame seeds and makes more tahini than just about any other company in the country.) In the mixing room, hunched over 60-gallon copper bowls, a dozen men punch, paddle, and knead the tahini to combine it with a taffy made of corn syrup, sugar, and egg whites, elongating and aerating the blend until the halvah holds together in sinewy strands.

"You can only get the strands when you mix by hand," says Richard Radutzky. "The art is in stretching but not breaking the strands. The halvah becomes doughlike. A nice piece of halvah will cut like fudge." A little vegetable oil poured in toward the end of the mixing helps bind everything together; then chocolate or vanilla flavoring is added, and the halvah is shipped to stores all over the world in bars, blocks, cylinders, or six-pound loaves that will be cut to order at deli counters. For its customers, Joyva has always been synonymous with this age-old sweet. "Among a certain demographic," Radutzky says, "I'm kind of a celebrity." —*Chris McConnell*

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: LANDON NORDEMAN; PURESTOCK/ALAMY; WILLIE O. LOMIBAO; IMAGEBRKER/ALAMY; CORBIS. ILLUSTRATION: SCOTT MENCHIN

Agenda April 2010

APRIL **7**

Birthday:
DAVID GRANDISON FAIRCHILD
1869
Lansing, Michigan

At just 29, this botanist, author, and, incidentally, son-in-law of Alexander Graham Bell established the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Section of Foreign Seed and Plant Introduction; he devoted 35 years to traveling the world and collecting more than 80,000 plants. Today we have Fairchild (pictured, below) to thank for many foods that are now grown stateside, among them alfalfa, nectarines, dates, horseradish, avocados, pistachios, soybeans, and mangoes.

APRIL **10**

FRANKLIN PARISH CATFISH FESTIVAL
Winnsboro, Louisiana

Launched in 1987 to promote the area's then-new catfish farming industry, this celebration has grown over the years to become Louisiana's largest one-day bash. Attractions include country, gospel, and bluegrass music, crafts, classic cars, and more than two tons of fresh catfish—battered, fried, and served hot to 20,000 attendees. Information: www.franklinparishcatfishfestival.com.

APRIL **10–11**

ALABAMA CHICKEN & EGG FESTIVAL
Moulton, Alabama

This chicken-focused festival takes over the small town of Moulton for the weekend with food, live music, and educational exhibits. Wing-eating contestants chow down, egg-toss teams get yolk on their faces, live bantam roosters strut their stuff, and dozens of vendors dream up new ways to fry and barbecue the poultry. Information: www.alabamachickenandeggfestival.com.

APRIL **16**

BANGUS FESTIVAL
Dagupan, Philippines

Milkfish, a bony fish with mild, white flesh that lives in the Philippines' swamps and estuaries, is known there by its Tagalog name, *bangus*. At this annual fête (pictured, center) in the city of Dagupan, which lasts through May 1, more than 20,000 *bangus* are grilled on side-by-side barbecues that stretch for 1.5 miles, and are then served with preparations ranging from coriander pesto to curried crab sauce. At the festival's "rodeo," contestants compete to see who will be this year's fastest deboner. Information: 212/575-7915.

APRIL **23**

Anniversary:
***REINHEITSGEBOT* ENACTED**
1516
Bavaria, Germany

Though Bavarian brewers once made use of spices, roots, and herbs, Duke Wilhelm IV, citing concerns over quality and safety, put an end to that practice when he issued the world's first food protection law. *Reinheitsgebot*, or the "Purity Law," decreed that beer be made only from barley malt, hops, and water. Yeast and malted wheat were later approved, but other ingredients were relegated to digestifs and other spirits. The decree, considered a restraint of trade by other countries, which were barred from exporting beers made with additives to Germany, was struck down by the European Court of Justice in 1987, but most German brewers still adhere to it, and craft brewers around the world use its ethos of purity to keep low-quality adjuncts, like corn and rice, out of their beers.

APRIL **24**

WAIKIKI SPAM JAM
Oahu, Hawaii

At this event, an astonishing 25,000 Hawaiians show their love for Spam, the canned ham product, which was introduced to the islands as soldiers' provisions during World War II. Fans can pick up Spam-themed gear and nosh on Spam-based treats. In years past, participating restaurants have offered dishes such as Spam sushi, barbecued Spam sliders, and a stuffed-phyllo "Spamokopita." Information: www.spamjamhawaii.com.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"I find my love fishing
His feet in the shallows.
We have breakfast together
And drink beer."

—ANONYMOUS EGYPTIAN TEXT, CA. 1500 B.C.

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Spring Ritual

Feasting on Catalonia's twice-picked onions

EVERY SPRING, WHEN my husband and I visit his family in Barcelona, we plan a *calçotada*, a party centered around eating piles of messy *calçots*, or green onions, that are blackened over open fires and served with a garlicky *romesco* sauce of toasted almonds, toasted bread, and smoky *ñora* peppers. *Calçots* are a Catalonian specialty grown in a unique way: harvested in early summer, they're replanted and then repeatedly covered with dirt so that the white part of the root elongates, producing a sweet and tender vegetable. (*Calçots* take their name from the Catalan *calçar*, which means to put shoes on, a reference to the process of covering the roots.) During the spring harvest, *calçotadas* take place throughout the region, but they're most popular in the city of Valls, about 65 miles west of Barcelona; there, legend holds, a farmer named Xat de Benaiges first developed the unique cultivation method, in the late 1800s, and Penya Artística de l'Olla, an artists' collective, threw the first *calçotada*, in 1946. Today, at restaurants like Valls's Casa Felix, *calçots* are charred over a fire made of grapevine cuttings and served with grilled lamb chops and *butifarra*, a pork sausage. After sliding off the onions' scorched outer layers, all present, from children to grandmothers, dunk the *calçots* in *romesco*, tip back their heads, and lower the long, white stalks into their mouths, leaving behind sooty fingers and a mound of carbonized leaves. —*Katherine Cancila*

At Masia del Pla restaurant north of Valls, diners partake in a Catalonian spring ritual, feasting on grilled *calçots* dunked in *romesco* sauce.

GRILLED GREEN ONIONS WITH ROMESCO

SERVES 4–6

Traditionally, this recipe calls for Spanish calçots and ñora peppers. Scallions and ancho chiles are good substitutes.

- **1 dried ancho chile, stemmed, halved, and seeded**
- **11 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil**
- **½ cup whole blanched almonds**
- **1 slice crustless white bread, roughly chopped**
- **3 cloves garlic, smashed**
- **1 yellow onion, thinly sliced**
- **4 tsp. smoked paprika**
- **1½ cups roughly chopped jarred roasted peppers**
- **2½ tbsp. sherry vinegar**
- **Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste**
- **2 lbs. scallions**

❶ Put chile and 2 cups boiling water into a bowl; let soften 5 minutes. Drain chile; roughly chop. Heat 8 tbsp. oil in a 10" skillet over medium-high heat. Add almonds and bread; cook until golden, 3–4 minutes. Transfer almond mixture to a bowl with a slotted spoon. Return skillet to medium heat. Add chiles, garlic, and onions; cook until golden, 3–4 minutes. Add paprika; cook for 1 minute. Put chile mixture, almond mixture, peppers, and vinegar into a food processor; purée. Season romesco sauce with salt and pepper; set aside.

❷ Build a medium-hot charcoal fire or heat a gas grill to medium-high heat. Drizzle scallions with remaining oil; season with salt and pepper. Grill until charred and tender, 5–6 minutes. Serve with romesco sauce.

Just Ask

The Great Gatsby

A South African sandwich named for a film

In Cape Town, I tried a tasty sandwich called a Gatsby. What's its story? —Bill Mazza, Syracuse, New York

IN CAPE TOWN, South Africa, a Gatsby is a soft, foot-long roll stuffed with fish or meat, vinegary french fries known as slap chips, and a sauce—usually *achar* (curried Indian pickle) or *piri piri* (a chile sauce). Rashaad Pandy of the fish-and-chips shop Super Fisheries, in the Athlone area on the city's outskirts, claims to have invented it one night in 1976 when, trying to feed some day laborers he had hired, he found that he had sold out of fish. So he filled a round Portuguese loaf with what he had: chips, fried bologna, and *achar*. One man exclaimed, "This is fantastic—a Gatsby smash!" (*Smash* was local slang for a tasty dish.) The film *The Great Gatsby* had recently played to enthusiastic crowds at the Athlone Bioscope. The early Gatsby's round loaf was also said to be shaped like the newsboy cap worn by Robert Redford in the movie. —*The Editors*

Have a question? Send it to: just.ask@saveur.com; or Just Ask, SAVEUR, 15 E. 32 St., 12th floor, New York, NY 10016.

ONE GOOD BOTTLE The first time I uncorked an aged rum, it was a terrible mistake. I was at my girlfriend's grandparents' place, and I wanted a drink. So I opened a random bottle from their cabinet. The first sip puzzled me: it was as caramel-like as a good brandy. But it wasn't brandy. I called a liquor store and read the guy the label: "*Añejo*, Havana, Cuba, 1957." "You could have auctioned that off for a lot of money," he said. The bottle contained pre-Castro aged rum, and as I later found out, my girlfriend's great-uncle, Philip Bonsal, had been the U.S. ambassador to Cuba under President Dwight D. Eisenhower; I'd ruined an heirloom. I couldn't stomach another sip. We gave it away to a Cuban friend, and I tried to forget about it—that is, until I tasted **Cruzan Single Barrel Rum** ($32). Though it's born of a distinct distilling tradition, this rum from St. Croix, a U.S. Virgin Island, has a flavor and pedigree that reminds me of the ill-fated Cuban *añejo*. Cruzan distiller Gary Nelthropp's family has been making rum in St. Croix since 1760, and this copper-hued blend of four- to 12-year-old rums aged together in American white oak embodies the refinement that comes with a deep heritage. It's clean, smooth, and not too sweet, with a velvety feel and notes of butter, vanilla, and coconut. You can mix it like brandy; it's delicious in a sidecar. Or you can sip it neat—perhaps while recounting past exploits that are, hopefully, less embarrassing than mine. —*B.A.*

FROM LEFT: TIM E. WHITE/ALAMY; ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI; ILLUSTRATION: SCOTT MENCHIN

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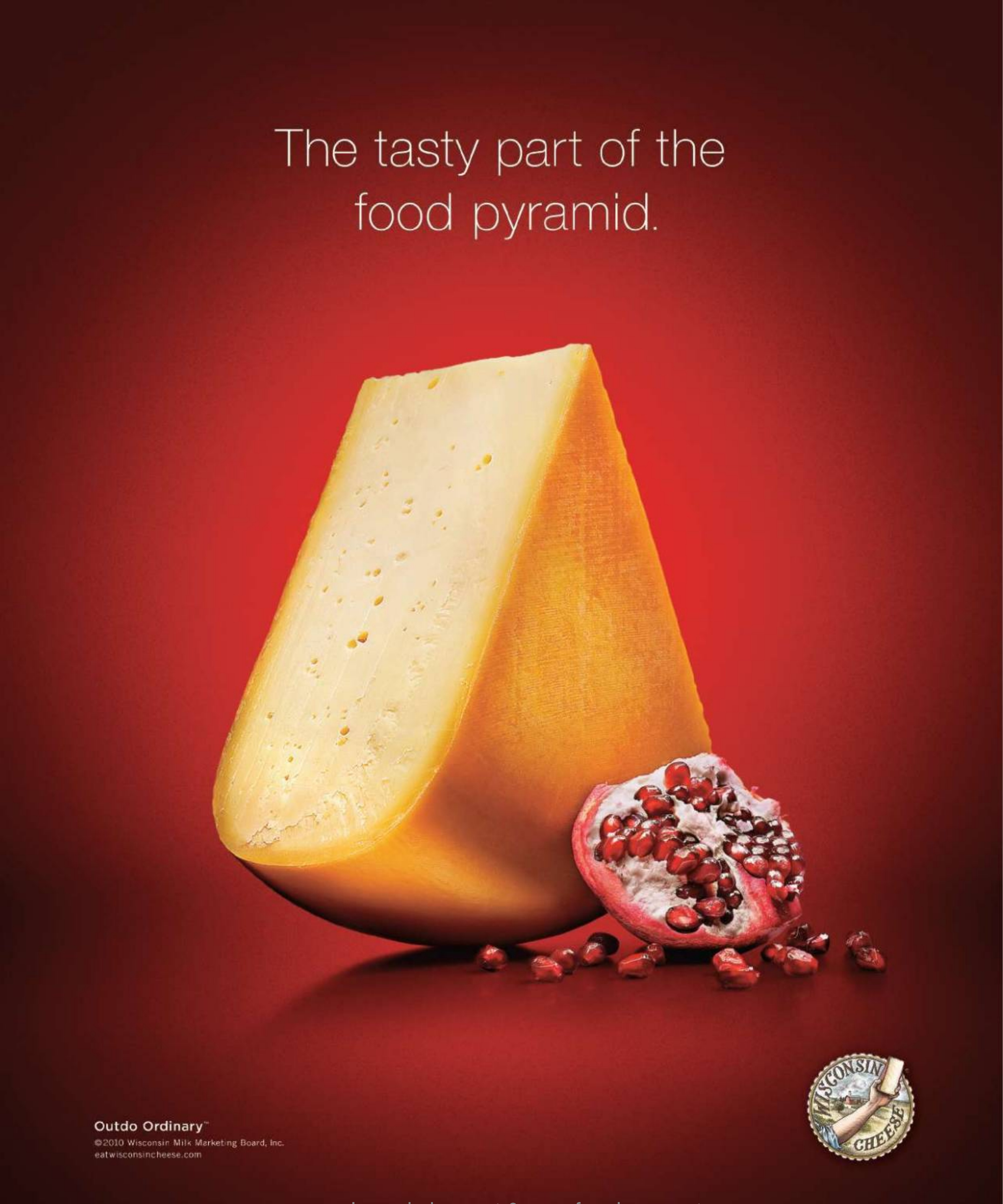

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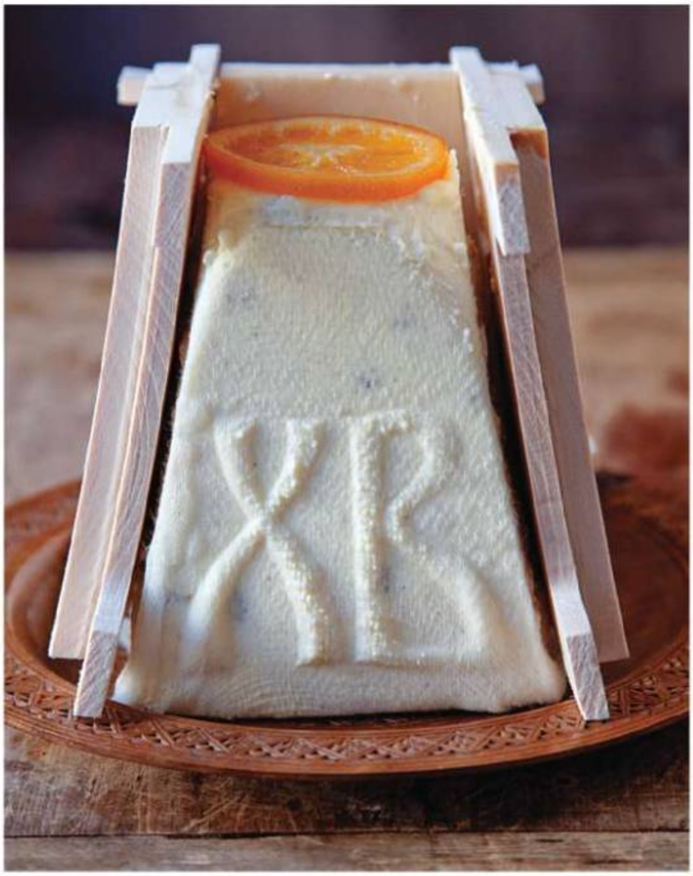

Easter Sweet

Russian *paskha* has universal appeal

PASKHA IS A RICH, airy sweetened cheese that's traditionally served in Russian homes to break the meat- and dairy-free Lenten fast. It also happens to be the name for the Russian Orthodox Easter, which gives you an idea of how central the food is to that holiday. In my family, we wake up to a tantalizing tower of *paskha* cheese, which we decorate with slices of fresh strawberries, every Easter morning. Made with a Russian farmers' cheese called *tvorog*, as well as cream, egg yolks, butter, and sugar, the treat is flavored with vanilla and studded with golden raisins. Then the *paskha* is pressed into a mold and chilled to set. (There's also a custardy cooked version made with essentially the same ingredients, but that's not how my family eats it.) In Russia, the *pasochnitsa*—the traditional four-sided wooden or plastic mold, embossed with the Eastern Orthodox cross and the Cyrillic letters *XB*, which stand for "Christ is risen"—is meant to evoke Christ's tomb. Some people like to dress the sides of the molded cheese with patterns of dried fruits and nuts to form religious symbols.

How good is *paskha*? Consider the fact that my secular New England family isn't even Russian. Back when my sisters and I were little, our Aunty Ginny, my mother's sister, became enamored of a recipe she had discovered for the dish, and before long it was our most delicious holiday tradition. —*Anna Stockwell*

The Russian Easter treat *paskha* in its traditional wooden mold, above.

TODD COLEMAN; ILLUSTRATION: SCOTT MENCHIN

PASKHA

(Russian-Style Farmers' Cheese)

SERVES 8

This recipe is based on one in *Please to the Table* (Workman, 1990) by Anya von Bremzen. A clean, one-quart clay flowerpot can be used in lieu of the paskha mold (see page 96 for a source).

- **1 lb. farmers' cheese, preferably Friendship brand**
- **4 oz. cream cheese, cubed and softened**
- **3/4 cup sugar**
- **3 hard-cooked egg yolks, crumbled**
- **3/4 cup heavy cream**
- **1/3 cup ground almonds**
- **1/4 cup golden raisins**
- **1/2 tsp. lemon extract**
- **1/4 tsp. lemon zest**
- **1/4 tsp. vanilla extract**
- **1/2 vanilla bean, scraped, seeds reserved**
- **Sliced or chopped fresh or candied fruit, for garnish**

1. Put farmers' cheese, cream cheese, sugar, and egg yolks into the bowl of a food processor; pulse to combine. Add cream; process until smooth. Transfer cheese mixture to a large bowl. Add almonds, raisins, lemon extract, lemon zest, vanilla extract, and vanilla seeds; stir vigorously to combine.

2. Line a 1-qt. paskha mold or a clean 1-qt. flowerpot with a double layer of cheesecloth. Set mold in a bowl, transfer cheese mixture into lined mold, and fold ends of cheesecloth neatly over the top. Put a plate over wide end of mold and weigh down with a soup can. Refrigerate, allowing liquid to drain, for at least 12 hours. To serve, invert mold onto a serving plate and remove mold; remove the cheesecloth. Decorate with candied fruit, if you like.

THE PANTRY, *page 96: Information on where to eat a Gatsby and on where to purchase Tupperware, Joyva halvah, and Cruzan rum.*

5 to Try

Virtual Victuals

Our favorite online food and wine courses

1 Absolute Coffee *www.absolutecoffee.co.uk.* Youri Vlag, a Sheffield, England, roaster, demonstrates creative designs in cappuccino foam and other barista techniques in this Skype-based class ($133).

2 American Tea Masters Association *www.teamasters.org.* The history, preparation, and serving of tea is taught by masters via Skype in this 13-week, one-on-one course for enthusiasts hoping to become certified tea masters ($2,125).

3 Ecole Chocolat *www.ecolechocolat.com.* The Professional Chocolatier Program ($595) is a rich curriculum in the making and marketing of chocolates, with a supplementary course in bean-to-bar techniques ($395).

4 Online Culinary School *www.onlineculinaryschool.net.* Interactive courses ($195) in basics like knife skills and the execution of classic stocks, soups, and sauces are taught by French chef Eric Arrouzé.

5 University of California at Davis Extension *www.extension.ucdavis.edu.* UC–Davis's famed Department of Viticulture and Enology offers Introduction to Winemaking ($650), surveying the technology, geography, and labeling of wines. —*David Bernstein*

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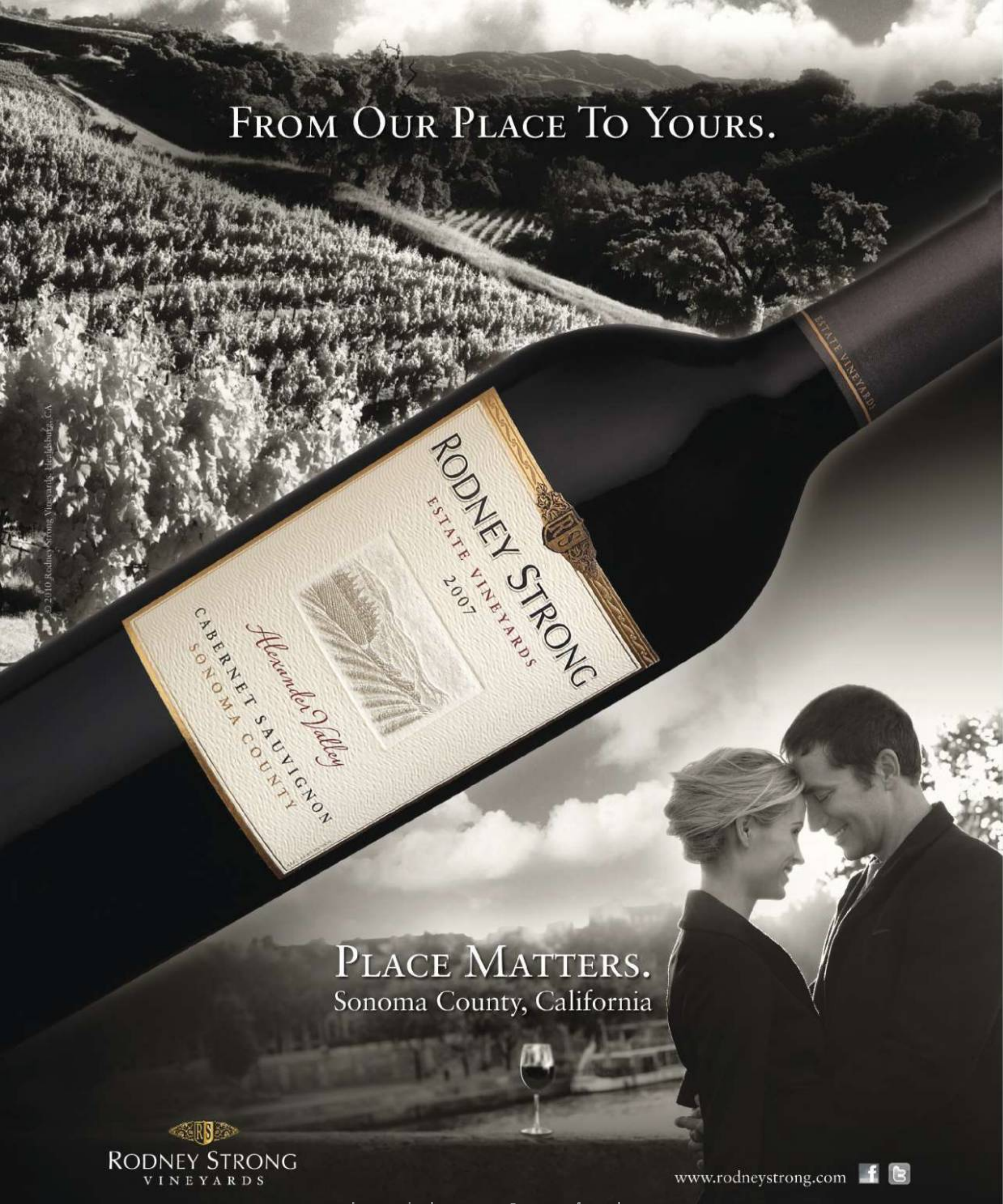

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CELLAR

Reading German

Demystifying the labels of some of Europe's finest rieslings

BY DAVID ROSENGARTEN

AS AN UNABASHED LOVER of German rieslings, I have to confess: I adore the fusty old riesling labels, with their famously wordy classifications—*riesling kabinett*, *riesling spätlese*, *riesling spätlese trocken*, and so on. Those traditional labels may seem indecipherable at first, but the fact is, no other country has a clearer system for telling consumers what they're getting. If you know what the terms mean, you can pretty much glean how the wine will taste: dry, sweet, rich, light, honeyed, or crisp.

Those old-school labels may one day be a thing of the past, however. Convinced that most international wine drinkers didn't understand the labeling language—or, worse, were misinterpreting it—many producers started doing their own thing in the 1980s. As the revisionist label movement grew, different winemaking regions and associations introduced new lingo and logic, in some cases confounding folks (like me) who had come to rely on the old classifications.

Until recently, almost all German rieslings bore the name of the village where the wine was made (in the case of the **Willi Schaefer** label above, that would be Graach, in the Mosel region), the name of the specific vineyard it came from (Domprobst), and one of the five age-old riesling designations: *kabinett*, *spätlese*, *auslese*, *beerenauslese*, or *trockenbeerenauslese*. Each one refers to a different level of grape ripeness at the time of picking. If moderately ripe, the wine is labeled *kabinett*. If riper, with more sugar at the time of harvest, it's *spätlese*. Riper still: *auslese*. *Beerenauslese* and *trockenbeerenauslese* are the ripest; they're dessert wines, and among the best in the world, if you ask me.

Here's where some German winemakers saw a problem: consumers seeking a dry white wine might assume that anything other than a *kabinett* would be too sweet. But that's not necessarily the case. Makers of *kabinett*, *spätlese*, and *auslese* rieslings may choose to ferment their wine longer, until more sugar has converted to alcohol, to make, say, a *spätlese halbtrocken* or *feinherb* (half-dry) or even a *spätlese trocken* (dry), a wine that's fruit-forward but totally dry. You can tell by looking at the alcohol content; anything above 12 percent will taste dry, no matter how ripe the grapes were when harvested.

Many of the new-style labels—like that of the **Eins Zwei Dry** from Leitz, a producer in the Rheingau region, and **Clean Slate**, from the Mosel region (both pictured at left)—take pains to announce how dry they are, but dispense with the ripeness classifications. The label for **Fritz's Riesling** (pictured) contains hardly any information about the wine at all, highlighting the winemaker's name instead. Other labels, however, like that of the crisp **Selbach** *riesling kabinett* (pictured), continue to display some of the old designations, albeit amid a more modern design. Meanwhile, many labels are starting to carry new symbols altogether. That little eagle in the lower right corner of the Willi Schaefer label? It's an imprimatur that the Association of German Premium Wineries (also known as the VDP) has awarded to 196 of the country's best producers. That group has also started identifying the German equivalent of France's *premier cru*, or first growth vineyards (with a logo that looks like a cluster of grapes next to the number one). When wines from these sites are dry, they're marked with the letters "GG," which stand for Grosse Gewächs, or great growth, indicating a *grand cru*.

Less confusing? Maybe not. But with these new labeling strategies, German makers of riesling are hoping to tell the world not just how the wine was made, but how very good it is.

COURTESY OF CLICK WINE GROUP; MICHAEL SKURNIK WINES; RUDI WIEST SELECTIONS

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INGREDIENT

Wild and Refined

Frogs' legs are prized food all over the world

SHANE MITCHELL

TODD COLEMAN

AS THE SUN DROPS BEHIND the sweet gum trees on a bend of the West Pearl River, 30 miles northeast of New Orleans, a night chorus begins. Hidden in the razor grass, *Rana catesbiana*, colloquially known as the North American bullfrog, bellows his territorial tune. As three camouflaged pontoon boats are loaded with gear—nets, flashlights, coolers of Abita beer—I stand on the dock and breathe in the tannic scent of this slow-moving tributary of the Mississippi. It's a humid summer evening on the Louisiana bayou and I'm going frog hunting with the New Orleans chef John Besh, who was raised beside this cypress swamp, and some of his friends. Later, we'll head back to this fish camp with a burlap "croaker sack" full of frogs and cook up a late-night supper with our catch.

This nocturnal ritual, or one like it, has taken place for millennia wherever wetlands are the prevalent terrain. Fossils from the Neolithic age suggest we've been eating frogs for more than 5,000 years, and they remain one of the world's truly international proteins, found in recipes for everything from frog soup in Singapore to frog stew in Indonesia, but it's the creatures' meaty, tender hind legs that have inspired some of the most delicious creations. In Vietnam, they're dusted with curry powder and stir-fried with lemongrass; in northern Italy, they often show up fried or in risottos. Frogs' legs are simmered with chiles, garlic, and cilantro in Mexico's Veracruz state, and they're venerated in Cantonese cuisine, where the sweet, delicate meat goes into restorative congees, or rice porridges. And in this country, you'll find them, often deep-fried, everywhere from Southern church suppers to the famous Nathan's hot dog stand on Coney Island.

But no culture is identified so closely with, or has devised so many dishes for, frogs' legs as that of the French, whose indefatigable appetite for the food gave rise, back in the 16th century, to the famous Anglo-Saxon habit of calling the French "frogs." The earliest recorded recipe for *cuisses de grenouille*, as frogs' legs are called in France, appears in a 1393 cookbook titled *Le Ménagier de Paris*, or "The Goodman of Paris"; the recipe calls for simply frying the thighs in oil. Since then, frogs' legs have been prized by France's greatest chefs. In his 1832 tome *L'art de la cuisine française*, Marie-Antonin Carême recommended dressing them in an egg yolk–and–cream sauce. In 1908 Georges Auguste Escoffier caused a sensation when he served Albert Edward, Prince of Wales, *cuisses de nymphes à l'Aurore*, or thighs of the dawn nymphs, at the Savoy Hotel. (Escoffier apparently found the English translation of *cuisses de grenouille* too vulgar to print on a menu.) And,

SHANE MITCHELL'S *most recent story for* SAVEUR *was "Little Big Island" (March 2009).*

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upon winning his third Michelin star in 1967 at L'Auberge de l'Ill, the Alsatian chef Paul Haeberlin created a *mousseline de grenouilles*, an elegant terrine of deboned and minced leg meat poached in riesling. Today, along with other classics like lobster bisque and escargots, frogs' legs remain a staple of traditional French restaurants.

In fact, one of the most storied French restaurants in this country shares its name with the amphibian. "We wouldn't dream of taking them off the menu," says Charles Masson, the manager of La Grenouille, one of the last bastions of classical French cooking in New York City. For all of its 48 years, the restaurant has served its famous frogs' legs *à la provençale*: gently sautéed in butter, parsley, and garlic and finished tableside with a squeeze of lemon. The last time I was there, Masson himself directed the service. "This is one of the greatest ways to prepare frogs' legs," he says. "You never get tired of them."

Masson gets his frogs' legs from France, though today you're just as likely to find ones from Vietnam, Bangladesh, Indonesia, and China. In fact, Indonesia is now the world's largest exporter of frozen bullfrogs. Most frogs' legs from Asia come from farm-raised animals belonging to the species *Rana tigrina*, the Indian bullfrog—a cousin of *Rana esculenta*, the little spotted green frog that populates Europe's fenlands and inspired Escoffier and his ilk. Bigger and arguably better than both those varieties is our homegrown *Rana catesbiana*, which can weigh as much as one and a half pounds and reach a length of eight inches. "The American bullfrog is the saber-toothed tiger of amphibians," says Ian Hillier, a marine biologist at New Orleans's Audubon Aquarium of the Americas. "Their skeletons are huge compared with European species, and they eat *everything*." In the wild, this includes bugs, fish, snakes, and even small birds; because of its diet, wild bullfrog tastes gamier than do those raised on fly meal in aquaculture ponds, where the animals are bred to have milder, whiter-toned meat.

Wild-caught frogs' legs remain a fresh, seasonal indulgence in New Orleans restaurants and in Louisiana home kitchens, where well-thumbed copies of *The Picayune's Creole Cook Book* rest on shelves next to the cast-iron étouffée pot. That essential book contains no fewer than six recipes for frogs' legs, about which the authors offer the following injunction: "Properly cooked, they are much more delicate than chicken and a great dish at recherché dinners."

It wasn't recherché down by the buggy banks of the West Pearl River the night I spent frogging with John Besh, but there were plenty of live *ouaouaron* (Cajun French for bullfrog). After we returned to the dock, wet and caked with river mud, I watched as Besh started a cook fire and then coated a mess of frogs' legs with buttermilk, dusted them with cayenne-seasoned flour, and flung them into a vat of boiling peanut oil—a variation on that ancient recipe in *Le Ménagier de Paris*. "This is the best fun a man can have legally," Besh said as he put a few flaky-crusted legs on my plate. I devoured each one in four toothsome bites; the meat was a little chewy, and closer in taste to fish than fowl, with a subtly pungent note that called to mind the frogs' marshy home.

CUISSES DE GRENOUILLE À LA PROVENÇALE

(Sautéed Frogs' Legs)

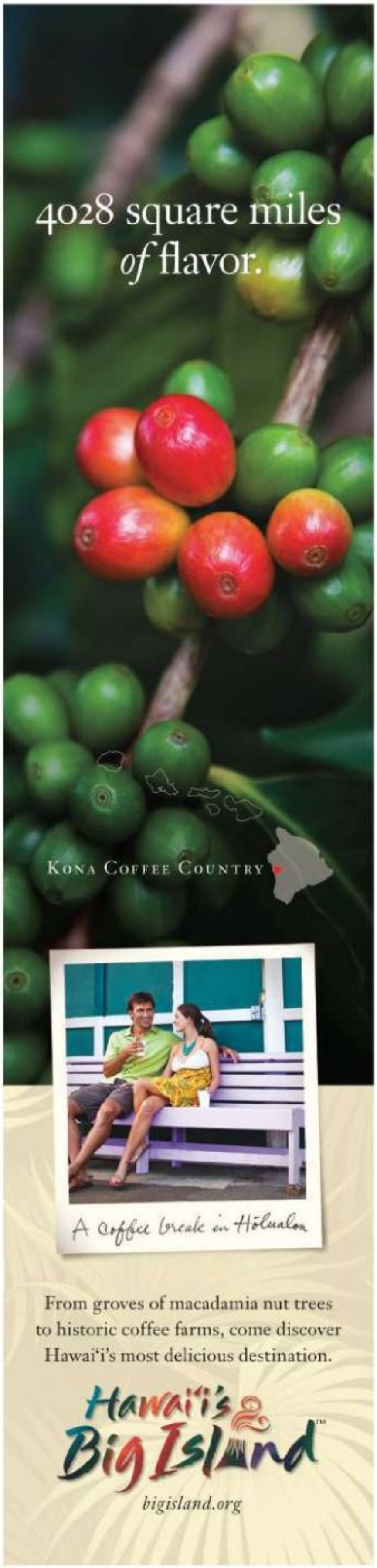
SERVES 4

This is a version of the signature dish (pictured on facing page) served at La Grenouille, the famed French restaurant in New York City.

- **12 pairs of frogs' legs (about 12 oz.), fresh or frozen and thawed (see page 96)**
- **1½ cups milk**
- **Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper**
- **1 cup flour**
- **16 tbsp. clarified butter**
- **2 cloves garlic, finely chopped**
- **1 tbsp. fresh lemon juice**
- **1 tbsp. finely chopped fresh parsley**

1. Snip apart each pair of frogs' legs. Combine frogs' legs and milk in a bowl and refrigerate for 30 minutes. Transfer legs to paper towels, pat dry, and season generously with salt and pepper. Put flour on a plate and, working in batches, coat legs with flour, shaking off excess, and transfer to another plate.

2. Heat 6 tbsp. butter in a 12" skillet over high heat until sizzling. Add half of the frogs' legs and cook, flipping once, until golden brown, 3–4 minutes. Transfer legs to a plate and set aside; wipe out skillet; repeat with 6 more tbsp. butter and remaining legs. Discard butter in skillet; then add remaining butter and the garlic and cook, swirling constantly, until mixture is fragrant and garlic is lightly browned, about 1 minute. Remove skillet from heat, add lemon juice, and season with salt and pepper. To serve, place frogs' legs in the center of a serving plate, drizzle sauce around edge of plate, and garnish with parsley. Serve with sautéed potatoes and tomatoes, if you like.



Gerard Hoogeboom, a crew member aboard the *American Eagle*, delivers a sausage frittata from the ship's kitchen.

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KITCHENWISE

Ship Shape

Cooking on a vintage schooner takes skilled and steady hands

BY BENJAMIN CONNIFF PHOTOGRAPHS BY LANDON NORDEMAN

BY THE TIME THE FIRST OF THE SIX PASSENGERS aboard the *American Eagle*, a 92-foot schooner based out of Rockland, Maine, emerged from his sleeping berth, the boat's cook, Robin Pietila, had been busy in the tiny galley for hours. She'd gotten up at four o'clock to feed kindling into the firebox that fuels the cast-iron oven and stovetop. It can take a long time for the stove to heat fully on a chilly morning like this one, and hot water needed to be ready for coffee and tea when the passengers awoke. Working a system of vents and flues, Pietila had channeled the heat from the firebox, now loaded with burning logs, to the stovetop. As soon as the water was boiling, she closed off the flue, forcing hot air into the oven, which she needed for today's breakfast, a lobster frittata. After a few minutes, she opened the oven and stuck in her hand, holding it there for several seconds before yanking it out. "If I can keep it in there for just five seconds, I know it's about 425 degrees," she said. The oven is the same kind that was originally installed on the boat, almost a century ago, and has no temperature gauge.

I've seen chefs perform miracles in cramped restaurant kitchens, but I've never seen any cook do as much with as little as Pietila, a 52-year-old former teacher from southern Maine with no formal culinary training, does here on the *Eagle*. She and other galley cooks provide one of the paramount pleasures of sailing aboard a vintage schooner off Maine's rocky shores, where a number of historic boats like the *Eagle* ferry paying guests up and down the coast. On a four-day sail from Rockland, I marveled at the dishes Pietila produced in her kitchen: from the fluffy, perfectly golden frittata to a delicious porcini-and-shiitake focaccia to fruit salads, turkey chili, and corn bread.

The *Eagle*'s galley, an eight-by-eight-foot space in the forward section of the boat, is furnished with nothing more than the wood-fueled oven, an equally old-fashioned icebox (simply a wooden cabinet lined with tin and packed with ice), a U-shaped countertop, and a sink fed by a 1,200-gallon tank. But it's not just the lack of space and amenities that poses a challenge. Pietila and her mess hand, 21-year-old Maine native Heather Brouwer, have to precook any baked dish that needs to set, like lasagne or brownies, before setting sail. When wind

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Clockwise from top left: cook Paul Dorr of the schooner *Nathaniel Bowditch* serves a meal in his boat's dining room; the wood-fueled stove on the *American Eagle*; Robin Pietila sautées mushrooms on the *Eagle*; Morgan Parmenter assembles strawberry shortcakes onboard the schooner *Heritage*; a breakfast of fruit, freshly baked bread, and frittatas is served on the *Eagle*; the space under the *Eagle*'s galley floor provides storage for food and, because it is so deep in the ship's hull, stays cool enough to keep fruits and vegetables fresh.

catches its sails, the craft heels, or tilts, to one side; brownies baked while heeling would be rock-hard on one side and pudding-like on the other. Heeling is especially troublesome when the ship is tacking back and forth to sail into the wind. On one such occasion, I observed Pietila scramble to hold everything she was making in place every few minutes as the warning "Tacking!" was shouted from above. Cabinet latches and a metal rail installed around the edge of the stovetop help in such instances, as do ceiling hooks, from which pots, pans, sifters, box graters, and the like can swing back and forth securely. But schooner cooks must rely heavily on their own ingenuity. Pietila, for example, wedges empty loaf tins into the oven to keep a pan of lasagne from sliding around.

According to the *Eagle*'s captain, John Foss, the galley looks pretty much the way it did when the boat was first launched from Gloucester, Massachusetts, in 1930. Née the *Andrew and Rosalie*, it was the last fishing schooner to be built in that city, and it fished actively for more than 50 years before Foss bought it in 1984. He then put it through a massive restoration that made the vessel more comfortable for passengers while retaining a period authenticity. In addition to refurbishing the hull, sails, and masts, Foss moved the bunks, which once surrounded the galley, into the main cabin and the hold, which had been designed to carry 100,000 tons of fish. In their place he built tables and bench seats so that guests, who normally dine on deck, would have somewhere to eat during bad weather. Foss also increased the galley's storage space: the benches double as bins for stowing flour, sugar, and oats.

When the *Eagle* first set sail 80 years ago, its galley cook was likely turning out meals made from salted meats, beans, preserved vegetables, and other nonperishable ingredients that weren't too different from what New England fishermen had been eating for centuries. Today, the cooks who man the galleys of Maine's vintage schooner fleet serve a more varied and ambitious menu, though many of the dishes—like the corn chowder ladled out for lunch on day three of our trip—remain rooted in Maine's Down East cooking traditions.

The most elaborate meal of my journey came on the last night, when the *Eagle* anchored with several other refurbished boats for a party—or gam, in sailing lingo—near Vinalhaven Island. All of us aboard got to visit the adjacent boats, climbing from deck to deck over the rails on the schooners' sides. Every vessel contained a galley similar to the *Eagle*'s, with interesting variations: some, like the 95-foot-long *Heritage*, boasted a larger dining room belowdecks, and one, the *Nathaniel Bowditch*, had a skylight that could be opened to let in fresh air and vent the stove's heat. Among the dishes I enjoyed on the boats were flaky haddock baked in a cream sauce, chicken with olives and capers, and strawberry shortcake. Well after sundown, we pulled anchor and set sail for Carver's Cove, where we would disembark in the morning—but not before devouring some of the best blueberry pancakes I've ever had, onshore or off.

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Four gin cocktails: the gin fix (front), the original dry martini (center), the martinez (rear left), and the Tante Marie Fizz; for recipes, see page 33.

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DRINK

Revolutionary Spirit

From classic styles to radical departures, gin is having a moment

BY DAVID WONDRICH

THE REVIVAL IN THE CRAFT of cocktail mixing has been kind to spirits with long histories and bold flavors. Fifteen years ago, American straight rye whiskey was almost extinct; now there are at least 25 different kinds on the market. Absinthe is back for the first time since before Prohibition, and, if you know where to look, you can even buy an obscurity like Batavia arrack, a funky Indonesian rum variant last popular here around 1850. Among those spirits, gin is enjoying a particularly flamboyant renaissance: it's hip, it's sexy; there are dozens of new brands on the market; distillers are experimenting with unorthodox and exotic flavorings; and long-extinct varieties are being brought back from the grave, some of them likely to come as a surprise to anyone whose notion of gin begins and ends with the words *London* and *dry*.

A century ago, London dry gin—the clear, bracing, juniper-forward stuff we've come to expect in our martinis—was a recent invention, just one among various English styles of gin, including Old Tom and Plymouth, each with its own characteristics. There was also genever, the earliest incarnation of the liquor, popularized by the Dutch in the 1500s; it's the one that inspired the English to make gin in the first place. (Indeed, *gin* is a slang abbreviation of *genever*, the Dutch word for juniper.) In addition to revivals of these antique styles, gin has also, in recent years, been subject to the same impulse that's brought us such novelties as Buddha's hand citron-flavored vodka and chocolate-mole cocktail bitters. Suddenly, between the traditionalists and experimenters, you need many more words to talk about gin. Here, then, is a Baedeker's tour of the new/old world of gin as it stands at the beginning of the 21st century.

FIRST, THE BASICS. To make any sort of gin, you take a base spirit and flavor it with juniper berries, the piney-tasting seed-cones that are gin's defining feature, along with an assortment of other "botanicals"—aromatic berries, barks, peels, seeds, roots, leaves, and flowers. Thus enhanced, the spirit is typically redistilled to integrate and refine the flavors. Since the 1600s, when the English first began making gin, the goal for London distillers has been to make the base spirit as clean tasting as possible and let the botanicals provide the flavor. By the middle of the 1800s, most of those distillers had replaced the old moonshiner-style pot still, which made an impure but rich-tasting spirit, with the newer column still, which could produce something pretty close to pure alcohol. This meant that they could base their gin on a spirit that was utterly neutral—essentially, vodka.

At the same time, custom in England and elsewhere had settled on a more-or-less standard list of gin botanicals, heavy on the juniper, with coriander and citrus peel for brightness and earthy orrisroot and celery-like angelica for depth. Because column distilling created a base spirit that was so clean, the sugar that distillers had once used to help smooth out the drink's rough edges was discarded (hence the *dry*). The resulting gin was spicy and bold enough to stand up in a mixed drink, while still being light in body, clean tasting, and refreshing. With the help of the dry martini, a Gilded Age invention whose popularity increased exponentially over the course of the 20th century (see "The Martini Variations," below), by 1940 London dry gin had driven every other style out of most markets.

Among the kinds of gin that faded from view around this time was Old Tom, a style, popular at the beginning of the 19th century, that was the direct predecessor to London dry. (There are various explanations for the

The Martini Variations

The martini, the gin cocktail par excellence, has, like gin itself, undergone a remarkable evolution over the years. American bartenders have been mixing gin with vermouth since the latter decades of the 19th century, though initially the gin would have been a rich, sweet genever and the vermouth a sweet one, too. The martinez (for a recipe, see page 33), an 1880s cocktail widely cited as the martini's starting point, was actually more like a manhattan than a dry martini. It featured the Old Tom style of gin, still sweet but lighter than genever, that was just then catching on in the U.S., coinciding with a trend toward lighter cocktails. Whether "martini" is a riff on "martinez" or has another root—some credit Gilded Age bon vivant Randolph B. Martine as the drink's inventor; others point to the Martini brand of vermouth—remains open to debate. But there's no question that the turn to light, crisp drinks continued, opening the floodgates not only to the new London dry style of gin, but also to dry vermouth from France and Italy. By the early 20th century, the two had converged in the dry martini, though the version coming across bars circa 1910, with its high proportion of dry vermouth and double dash of orange bitters (for a recipe, see page 33), was still a step removed from the minimalist take—nothing more than ice-cold gin and the merest hint of vermouth—that's reigned since the 1940s. Still, even the mutable martini has its limits. There are ingredients—vodka, I'd argue, or acid-green apple schnapps—that never a true martini make, no matter what kind of glass they're served in. *—Beth Kracklauer*

MICHAEL KRAUS

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name, none of them wholly convincing.) While everybody can agree on the definition of London dry gin—indeed, its characteristics are so well known that it's now made all over the world, not just in London—Old Tom is a different story. I speak from experience here: two years ago Tad Seestedt—a distiller based in Sheridan, Oregon, and an old friend of mine—asked me to help him come up with an Old Tom gin. It wasn't easy: Old Tom's heyday was a period of great technological and cultural change, and what began the 19th century as a thick-textured pot-still spirit that was highly flavored, sweetened to cover impurities, and often barrel-aged, ended it as something not far from London dry gin, only with a touch of sugar and a slightly different balance of botanicals.

That breadth of definition does provide a good deal of wiggle room for the distiller. In the end, after much research and tasting, Seestedt decided to base his gin, which he called Ransom, on an early version of Old Tom. He used a malty, lightly whiskeylike distillate that blended the product of an old-fashioned pot still with vodkalike neutral spirits infused with a good, strong dose of juniper and other botanicals. Then he lightly aged that mixture in old wine barrels, which gave it a rather startling orange color. Now, in addition to Ransom, there's another new Tom on the market, and it actually comes from England. Hayman's is lightly sweet and floral, with a fuller body than that of a London dry but none of the maltiness that one finds in the Ransom. Either of these gins will make for a fabulously rich and aromatic martinez (for a recipe, see page 33), the 1880s-era Old Tom–based cocktail made with maraschino liqueur and sweet vermouth that is the antecedent of the martini.

While Old Tom has been rescued from oblivion, Plymouth gin never completely died out, although it almost gave up the ghost in the 1980s. Plymouth gin has been made in the English port of the same name since 1793 and by law can be made only there. Nowadays, the one made by Plymouth's sole remaining distillery is a very appealing, bright, and clean-tasting gin that is virtually indistinguishable from a London dry. It didn't used to be so. What changed is not the botanicals, which have remained the same since 1793, but rather the base spirit, which has been lightened up quite a bit, judging by accounts such as the one in an industrial encyclopedia published in London in 1867, which describes Plymouth gin as "flavour[ed] with the wash of whisky distilleries." You can also glean clues about Plymouth gin's original character from an 1869 recipe collection titled *Cooling Cups and Dainty Drinks*, by William Terrington, who points out that Plymouth gin "closely resembles Hollands."

Hollands, you see, is the old English name for Dutch genever, and where the English have, over the last couple of centuries, moved steadily toward keeping the base spirit in the background, the Dutch preference has always been to put it front and center, with its most delectable impurities and peculiarities intact. (And not just the Dutch: genevers are also made in Belgium, Germany, and parts of northern France.) As a result, if London dry gin can accurately be described as a flavored vodka, genever is closer to a flavored whiskey. There's a reason for that. The roots of genever go back to the 1500s, when the Dutch began flavoring their raw grain distillate with juniper berries in order to disguise the crude, oily taste of the impure spirit. They probably learned to do this from their neighbors the Germans, but the Dutch were the ones to perfect the process. Using their early mastery of pot-still distilling and a plentiful supply of high-quality rye and barley shipped from the eastern Baltic regions, they eventually came up with a spirit that was rich and grainy, with just enough juniper to add spice. In England, Dutch genever was so prized that as late as 1820, when the Brits had plenty of perfectly good domestic gin to drink, bottlings of barrel-aged Holland were selling for the same price as old cognac.

Today's genevers range from dark and weighty antiquarian styles to varying blends

5 Styles of Gin

Gin's roots reach back to 16th-century Holland, and the various types that have emerged since then are as different as the eras that produced them. From clear and bone-dry to honey colored, sweet, and fruity, these gins are hardly interchangeable when it comes to mixing drinks. Here's a guide to the five styles currently available and the cocktails best suited to each one. (See THE PANTRY, page 96, for sources.) —*D.W.*

London Dry

Very dry, light bodied, and pungent, this is what most of us think of when we think of gin. **Good for** Gin-and-tonics, aviations, dry martinis (see recipe, facing page). **Recommended brands** Tanqueray ($29/750 ml; big, piney, and floral); Beefeater ($27/liter; lean and bright, with a distinctive black pepper flavor); Boodles ($27/liter; soft and clean, with a roselike bouquet).

Plymouth

Though originally as rich as a Dutch genever, today this regional gin, made only in Plymouth, England, is as clean and bracing as a London dry. **Good for** Most any drink in which you might use a London dry gin. **Recommended brands** There's only one made in Plymouth currently; it's called, appropriately enough, Plymouth ($30/liter; smooth, with plenty of citrus and juniper).

Old Tom

London dry's sweeter, fuller-bodied parent has only recently come back on the market after decades in suspended animation. **Good for** Tom collinses, gin rickeys, martinezes (see recipe, facing page). **Recommended brands** Hayman's ($26/750 ml; sweet, with notes of candied orange peel and violets); Ransom ($36/750 ml; rich and spicy, with black pepper and vanilla flavors).

Genever

This style—the original—uses a malt-spirit base, making it not unlike a flavored whiskey. Less botanical than the English styles, and more sippable. **Good for** Sipping straight and chilled, john collinses, gin fixes (see recipe, facing page). **Recommended brands** Bols Genever ($37/750 ml; malty, with a hint of black licorice); Genevieve ($36/750 ml; grainy and hot on the palate).

International Style

At their best, these new gins, drawing on an expanded palette of botanicals, are as subtle and intriguing as fine fragrances. **Good for** Inventing new cocktails, such as the Tante Marie Fizz (see recipe, facing page). **Recommended brands** Hendrick's ($30/750 ml; delicate and floral); DH Krahn ($25/750 ml; soft over all, briny and earthy); Whitley Neill ($32/750 ml; full, fruity, and very well integrated).

ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI (5)

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of richer and lighter spirits. Almost all of them (with the exception of the so-called *jonge* or "young" genevers, a light style developed in the 20th century) feature too much oily maltiness to be used in a dry martini. If, however, you like a plusher and sweeter cocktail, like an old fashioned, the whiskeylike graininess and the unobtrusiveness of the juniper in a good genever make it a fine substitute for bourbon or rye, particularly if you can get your hands on an aged version. Genever also works well in place of bourbon in the lemony-sour john collins cocktail, and, when mixed with sugar, lemon juice, and water and served over crushed ice, it makes for a fine and muscular gin fix (for a recipe, see below).

Before 1900 genever was the dominant style of gin sold in the United States; it took the advent of the dry martini, shipping blockades during the World Wars, and the rising popularity of vodka among American drinkers to do it in. Right now, good genevers are only beginning to reappear on the American market. The one most visible in cocktail bars is the recently launched Bols Genever, which is in the *oude* ("old") style, made with a lot of rich, pale-yellow pot distillate. And if you can find a bottle of aged Claeyssens, made near Lille, France, since 1817, it will be well worth the effort of tracking it down. There's even a domestic genever, the rustic and potent Genevieve, from the pioneer microdistillers at Anchor in San Francisco—who also, it should be noted, make Junipero, a very fine London dry.

ANCHOR AND RANSOM AREN'T the only American microdistilleries making gin, not by a long shot. The number of new, local brands is rising so fast that it's impossible to print a count that won't be out-of-date by the time this magazine hits newsstands. Some of these are distributed to only one or two bars; others—Aviation from Oregon, Bluecoat from Pennsylvania, Death's Door from Wisconsin—have begun breaking out nationally. Many of these distillers, as well as a number of new producers in Europe, are showing a willingness to diverge from the traditional palette of gin botanicals, bringing formerly inconspicuous elements to the fore and even experimenting with flavors quite new to the world of gin.

Following the traditional English preference, these new-style gins tend not to foreground the flavor of the base spirit, keeping it neutral instead. (The term *pot still*, when it appears on one of these bottles, tends to apply only to the second distillation, in which the neutral spirit, already charged with botanicals, is run through a still again for purposes of further integration and refinement.) Unlike the classic English gins, however, many new gins are putting the juniper in the background, too. In its place, they are bringing forward flavors such as lemon peel (a common enough gin botanical) or grape blossom and rose petal (more radical innovations). The results can be startling if used in one of the standard London dry cocktails. In the hands of a careful, creative mixologist, though, they provide new, often delightful paths for the gin drinker, or even the non–gin drinker, to explore. For instance, one of these new-generation gins—Whitley Neill, a small-batch spirit from England that includes as its signature note the tart flavor of the fruit of the African baobab tree—inspired me to invent a cocktail that I call the Tante Marie Fizz: gin and freshly squeezed lemon juice laced with cayenne and a splash of Bénédictine herbal liqueur, rounded out with egg white, shaken vigorously to produce an airy froth, and topped off with a little seltzer.

What are we to name this last gin style? On their labels, these new spirits usually call themselves London dry. It might be time to stop doing that. The brisk, juniper-driven London dry style is the product of one historical moment, and it works best in the drinks that evolved along with it. These new gins, products of a different era, work best in cocktails conceived with them in mind. I call them "International Style" gins, because they come from everywhere and nowhere and, like the school of architecture that goes by the same name, look to the future, not the past.

Gin Cocktails

For years, genever and Old Tom gins were unavailable in the U.S. Their recent return has made it possible, for the first time in decades, to enjoy authentic renditions of the 19th- and early-20th-century cocktails they inspired. The original 1910 dry martini is, in its way, as revelatory as the Tante Marie Fizz, a contemporary creation designed to show off a particular gin to its best advantage. (All pictured on page 30.) —*D.W.*

Gin Fix

Makes 1 cocktail

A fix, otherwise known as a "fix-up," can be made with brandy, rum, whiskey, or gin. If you're going with gin, genever is the style to use (and the one that would have graced the drink originally).

In a small glass, stir together 2 tsp. fresh lemon juice, 1 tsp. superfine sugar, and 1 tsp. water until sugar is dissolved. Stir in 2 oz. genever. Pour mixture into a small highball glass three-quarters filled with cracked ice. Garnish with seasonal fruit such as blackberries.

Martinez

Makes 1 cocktail

In the 1880s, Old Tom gin, a style with quite a bit more sweetness than London dry, was just beginning to gain popularity in America. This is the drink that put it over the top.

In a large glass, combine 2 oz. Old Tom–style gin, 1 oz. Italian red vermouth, ½ tsp. Luxardo maraschino liqueur, 2 dashes bitters (preferably Bitter Truth Aromatic Blend), and 2 cups ice. Stir for 15 seconds and strain into a chilled cocktail glass. Twist a strip of lemon peel over the top and drop it in.

Original Dry Martini

Makes 1 cocktail

A London dry gin can stand up to a lot more vermouth than you might suspect. The original 1910s-era formula for this iconic drink demonstrates that fact in a remarkably suave cocktail.

In a large glass, combine 1 ½ oz. London dry or Plymouth gin, 1 ½ oz. French white dry vermouth, 2 dashes orange bitters (preferably Regan's Orange Bitters No. 6), and 2 cups ice. Stir for 15 seconds and strain into a chilled cocktail glass. Twist a strip of orange peel over the top and drop it in.

Tante Marie Fizz

Makes 1 cocktail

Since Whitley Neill gin gets its signature tanginess in part from the fruit of the African baobab tree, this sweet, sour, and spicy apéritif takes its name from a song by Senegal's legendary Orchestra Baobab.

In a cocktail shaker, combine 1½ oz. Whitley Neill gin, ¾ oz. fresh lemon juice, ¾ oz. Bénédictine liqueur, ⅛ tsp. cayenne pepper, 1 egg white, and 1 cup cracked ice. Cover and shake for at least 15 seconds; strain into a chilled fizz glass. Top with 1–2 oz. seltzer.

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MEMORIES

The Smuggler

Nothing tastes as good as contraband cuisine

BY ELISSA ALTMAN

SOMETIME IN THE SUMMER OF 1958, before I was born, my father was deemed a threat to Canadian national security. He was not a dangerous man, nor was he Canadian. He had relocated from New York City to London, Ontario, as a salesman for a knitting machine manufacturer called Knit-King, a job that required him to fly frequently across the border. This suited my dad, an ex–World War II fighter pilot who loved to be in the air, just fine.

My father's last stop on every trip to the States was Brooklyn, to visit his parents. One night, after wistfully describing his longing for foods cooked in chicken fat—particularly salami and eggs, that delicious breakfast scramble so beloved in New York Jewish homes—his mother helped him pack his suitcase. In it, she buried a jar of her homemade schmaltz so that he could cook those dishes for himself, on his own little electric burner, in his own little kitchen, in another country.

The airport authorities found it. It was hard to miss: my grandmother had secured the lid with a wax paper–and–rubber band seal, but it had leaked; by the time Dad touched down in Toronto, his suitcase was drenched in chicken fat. The authorities informed him that it was illegal to transport certain foodstuffs across the border; chicken fat was surely one of those foods, they said, even though it wasn't on their official list.

My grandmother was outraged when she heard the news. At the end of her son's next visit she hid a jar of *gribenes*—fried chicken skin cooked in schmaltz—inside a cordovan wingtip. It was confiscated. Weeks later, customs officials discovered chopped liver in his toiletry bag. This time, they issued him a fine, promised to deport him should he be caught again, and told him, politely, to have a nice day.

Dad complained to his mother about the problems she had caused. Aside from the threat of deportation, his laundry bills were unreasonably high, and on at least three occasions his entire travel wardrobe wound up smelling like her apartment after Sabbath dinner—not a good thing for a lonely bachelor. She was convinced he would starve, but she promised to stop packing his suitcase with clandestine, leaky foods. And so the next time he faced those Canadian customs guards, he had nothing to fear.

"You do understand by now, Mr. Altman, that transporting certain foodstuffs across the border is illegal and considered a breach of national security?"

My father nodded, smiling. "There's nothing in my suitcase, gentlemen, except for my clothes. But feel free to look."

One of the customs agents opened the bag and promptly seized a three-pound kosher salami carefully hidden by my grandmother in a pair of her flesh-colored support hose. Rubber-banded to the meat was an oily note: "So you shouldn't go hungry. Love, Mom." Dad was held in custody and questioned for several hours that day.

Years later, my father would never say whether his hasty return to the States shortly thereafter was the result of his actually being deported as a security risk. But his repeated run-ins with those customs officials did have one clear consequence: for the rest of his life my dad made a sport of his dealings with airport security. He got good at outsmarting agents and mastered the art of the bluff; well into his seventies and in airports all over the world, he transported everything from entire wheels of Gruyère from Switzerland to Scotch eggs from London to frozen apricot-filled *palačinky* crêpes from Prague.

I happened to be with my dad on his final international trip. At New York City's JFK Airport, on our return from Paris, a customs agent made the usual inquiry. "Are you bringing anything illegal back into this country? Any firearms? Chemicals? Foodstuffs?"

My father shrugged. "No, son, I'm not."

The agent unzipped Dad's carry-on and pulled out a stash of travel brochures and maps. Then a smile spread across the man's face; buried at the bottom of the bag, tucked inside a red striped tube sock, was half of a 12-inch-long garlic *saucisson*.

The agent held up the contraband meat. "Where is the rest of it, sir?"

"I ate it on the plane. Am I in trouble?"

The agent tossed the sausage into a bin filled with confiscated Camembert, foie gras, and the like. He shook his head and waved us through the checkpoint. "Be more careful next time, sir."

In the taxi on the way home, my father marveled, as he always did, at the beauty of the skyline at night. After a while, he flipped open a tiny Opinel cheese knife he'd somehow secreted from Paris in his back pocket, removed the other half of the sausage from his telephoto lens case, and leaned forward to share a slice of it with the driver.

ELISSA ALTMAN *is the founder of the blog PoorMansFeast.com. Her most recent story for* SAVEUR *was "A Fish Tale" (August/September 2009).*

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CLASSIC

The Art of Paella

Spain's famed rice dish is an ever-evolving creation

BY DAVID ROSENGARTEN

THERE'S ONE THING THAT MOST PAELLA enthusiasts in Spain seem to agree on: that the sunny, fluffy yellow rice dish served at Spanish restaurants all over the world, the version topped with red peppers and loaded with everything from shrimp to chorizo to lobster, is not the real thing. Real Spanish paella, which is to say Valencia-style paella—the dish originated in that eastern coastal Spanish city—is an altogether darker, richer, smokier creation: denser than a pilaf, drier than a risotto, and arguably more satisfying than either. But even in Valencia, as I discovered recently over the course of several visits, there's not much of a consensus regarding how this delicious dish, perhaps Spain's most famous, should be prepared and what should, or shouldn't, go into it.

True, there does exist a widely accepted original recipe, for a dish that has remained more or less constant through the ages. The original *paella valenciana* probably dates to the early 1800s and consists of saffron-scented rice cooked with rabbit, chicken, local snails called *vaquetes*, and three types of beans: a broad string bean called *ferraúra*, a lima-like dried bean called *garrofó*, and a white bean called *tavella* (which is hard to find outside of Spain). And, not surprisingly, you can find versions of the original *paella valenciana* all over town. But to travel to Valencia solely for that dish would be a mistake. Many restaurants serve a long list of paellas, including ones stocked with seafood and others made with seasonal vegetables and meats. Most of them are delicious; a few are sublime. Tinkering, it seems, is inherent to the culture of paella.

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THE EARLIEST KINDS OF PAELLA were products of purely local ingredients and eating habits. The dish exists because of rice, and rice has existed in Valencia and its environs ever since the Moors planted it there more than 1,300 years ago, in a lagoon called the Albufera, where the grain is still grown today. Saffron, that precious and earthy spice, brought to Spain by Arab traders in the tenth century, was the Moors' preferred seasoning for rice, and it remains a traditional paella ingredient. Local game like rabbit, and foraged foods like snails, as well as various legumes and vegetables, found their way into rice dishes during the Moorish occupation of Spain, but pork (which was prohibited under Muslim dietary laws) and shellfish did not. After the Moors left Spain in 1492, the Valencians' love for rice dishes lived on. As for that original recipe, one of the first printed versions of it appeared in 1840, but evidence suggests that the cooking of a rabbit–snail–bean–saffron "paella" (named after the wide, shallow steel pan in which such dishes were cooked) was by then a Valencian ritual; the dish was prepared in the countryside over an open fire of dried vines and orange-tree branches, usually on Sundays, usually by the men of the family while the women were at church.

Paella remained a regional food for a good long while. Back when that original paella recipe was first published, Spain wasn't a popular destination on the tourist track, and its cuisine was little known beyond its borders. But the 20th century—the century of Picasso, Dalí, Buñuel—saw a burgeoning interest around the world in all things *español*. Epicures were eager to discover the country's rich, rustic flavors; in 1950, Elizabeth David, the cookbook writer who delivered England from its wartime gastro-dreariness, published *A Book of Mediterranean Food* (John Lehmann), which included a recipe for paella containing the hitherto untraditional combination of chicken and shrimp. (By this time, coastal cooks in Valencia were probably making seafood-stocked *paella a la marinera*, but that recipe never includes meat.) Before long, gourmands in England, America, and beyond were serving all kinds of variants of the dish out of brightly colored Dansk paella pans along with goblets of sangria.

José Luis Gonzalez, the owner of L'Establiment, a legendary paella

Fisherman's paella, left (see page 40 for a recipe).

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restaurant in El Palmar, not far from Valenica, told me one afternoon, after I'd polished off one of his superb traditional paellas, that what most profoundly affected the evolution of the dish was the tourist boom of the 1960s. Among the first things to change? The cooking method. Formerly a dish forged over open fires and endowed with all the advantages such cooking confers—crisp, flame-licked edges, smoke-tinged meat—paella became something that was made indoors, in a restaurant setting.

CHEFS IN VALENCIA SUDDENLY HAD TO ANSWER TO TOURISTS WHO WANTED SHRIMP, PORK, AND, HECK, WHY NOT LOBSTER, TOO

Rather than cooking a few large pans over a wood fire and serving the dish family style, restaurant cooks had to make hundreds of smaller portions and answer to tourists who wanted shrimp, spicy pork sausage, and, heck, why not some lobster, too. Today you can find the odd wood-fire holdout at rural Spanish restaurants, at family gatherings, and at local festivals, but the heyday of the traditional vine-wood-fired paella is past.

And yet, Valencia's cooks have found ingenious ways to replicate some of the traits of flame-kissed paella on the stove top. Adding artichokes, which darken the color of whatever they're cooking in, is one way. To echo the woodsy taste formerly imparted by smoke, they'll often toss in some smoked paprika or a few sprigs of rosemary (which appeared in many traditional paella recipes anyway). At L'Establiment, cooks start their paellas on the stove and finish them over a wood-burning fire. I've found that cooking a paella over a wood fire on my Weber grill works well, too.

Still, there are a few old-fashioned paella-making basics that Valencian cooks don't mess with. All paellas start with a *sofrito*, or flavor base, of chopped vegetables cooked in oil—typically garlic and tomatoes, and sometimes onions and Spanish red peppers called *ñoras*. The longer the *sofrito* cooks, the darker and more intensely flavored the paella will be. Also indisputable is this: once you've stirred the rice with the cooked *sofrito* and the stock, you leave it alone, uncovered. When the rice is cooked through, after 20 minutes or so, some cooks blast the heat to create a flavorful crust, called *socarrat*, on the bottom of the pan.

Rice, of course, is another constant, but what kind is a matter of disagreement. I'd heard that the short-grained variety known as *bomba* was the gold standard, but many Valencian chefs I talked to seem to be turning against it, pointing out that while it doesn't overcook as easily as most varieties, it doesn't soak up flavor very well either. Many chefs are turning to other Valencian varieties, like *bahía* and *senia*, which are medium-grained (and unavailable in the States; Italian *vialone nano* is a good substitute). Then there's the question of saffron. "One out of a hundred restaurants in Valencia uses saffron these days," José Fernandez, the chef of La Pepica, one of Valencia's most venerated paella restaurants, told me. It's much too expensive. Instead, many cooks color their paellas with paprika or a yellow powder, made mostly of cornstarch, salt, and food coloring, called *colorante*, which is sold in supermarkets all over town.

After a few days of polling Valencia's chefs on the finer points of paella, I decided to leave them to their debates, to embrace the changing nature of the dish, and to focus on the singular pleasure of eating it. On this subject, most Valencians seem to follow a well-thumbed script: a pan is set on the table and diners scoop up their own portions with wooden spoons, making sure to get plenty of pieces

The Principles of Paella

No matter what kind of paella you're making, the basic steps are the same (a mixed paella is pictured; see page 40 for a recipe). Whether cooking over a fire or on a stove top, the key is to build flavors from the bottom of the pan up. Paella pans (typically 16 to 18 inches wide; see page 96 for a source) are designed for this purpose, though a wide skillet of the same size will work, too. —*Hunter Lewis*

1 Steeping the saffron The most traditional way of coloring and flavoring paella is with the dried threads of this spice. Crush them between your fingers over a small bowl and cover with hot water to allow the flavor to bloom.

2 Sautéing the meat or fish Cooking the ingredients in hot oil will build a strong flavor base. If using shrimp or fish, remove it from pan before it's completely cooked through to prevent overcooking.

3 Cooking the *sofrito* This vegetable base (garlic, tomatoes, peppers, and so on), cooked with paprika until the spice infuses the ingredients, is another important building block of flavor. The longer the *sofrito* cooks, the darker and richer the paella will taste.

4 Adding liquid Paella purists in Valencia claim that their local water is an essential ingredient, but using some chicken stock or seafood stock (which should be added at the same time as the saffron and its steeping liquid) will yield a more deeply flavored dish.

5 Cooking the rice After the rice is distributed evenly, stop stirring and allow the grains to soak up the liquid. Move the pan every few minutes so all parts receive direct heat and cook evenly.

6 The final simmer When a thin layer of cooking liquid remains, reduce heat to low, add remaining ingredients, and cook until the rice has absorbed the remaining liquid.

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of burnished meat or vegetables, and to scrape up some of the chewy, caramelized *socarrat.* The tradition is to start at the perimeter and work your way to the center. It's a convivial way to eat, no matter what's in your paella.

PAELLA VALENCIANA

(Paella with Rabbit and Snails)

SERVES 6–8

This Valencia-style paella (pictured above, left) is based on a recipe in Jeff Koehler's *La Paella* (Chronicle, 2006), as is the one for paella a la marinera, at right. See page 96 for sources for hard-to-find ingredients and equipment.

- **20 threads saffron, crushed (about ¼ tsp.)**
- **1 lb. boneless skinless chicken thighs, cut into 1½" cubes**
- **½ rabbit (about 1 lb.), cut into 6–8 pieces**
- **Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste**
- **½ cup extra-virgin olive oil**
- **½ lb. shucked lima beans, fresh or frozen and thawed**
- **½ lb. green or romano beans, trimmed and halved crosswise**
- **2 tsp. smoked paprika**
- **3 cloves garlic, minced**
- **3 medium tomatoes, minced**
- **7 cups chicken broth**
- **36 live or canned snails (if canned, rinse and boil for 3 minutes and then drain)**
- **2½ cups short-grain rice, preferably Valencia or bomba**

❶ Put saffron and ¼ cup hot water in a small bowl; let sit for 15 minutes. Season chicken and rabbit with salt and pepper. Heat oil in a 16"–18" paella pan over medium-high heat. Add chicken and rabbit and cook, turning often, until golden brown, about 6 minutes. Add the beans, paprika, garlic, and tomatoes and cook, stirring occasionally, until garlic is soft, about 5 minutes. Add reserved saffron mixture, broth, and snails; season with salt and bring to a boil over high heat.

❷ Sprinkle in rice, distribute evenly with a spoon, and cook, without stirring, until rice has absorbed most of the liquid, 10–12 minutes. (If your pan is larger than the burner, rotate it every two minutes so different parts are over the heat and the rice cooks evenly.) Reduce heat to low and cook, without stirring, until rice has absorbed the liquid and is al dente, 5–10 minutes more. Remove pan from heat, cover with aluminum foil, and let sit for 5 minutes before serving.

PAELLA A LA MARINERA

(Fisherman's Paella)

SERVES 6–8

This paella (pictured on page 37) is popular along Spain's coasts. See page 96 for sources for hard-to-find ingredients and equipment.

- **25 threads saffron, crushed (a heaping ¼ tsp.)**
- **1 lb. boneless monkfish filets, cut into 2" pieces**
- **Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste**
- **½ cup extra-virgin olive oil**
- **8 langoustines or extra-large head-on shrimp in the shell**
- **10 oz. cuttlefish or small squid, cleaned and cut into 1" pieces**
- **1 tbsp. smoked paprika**
- **4 medium tomatoes, minced**
- **3 cloves garlic, minced**
- **1 green bell pepper, cored and chopped**
- **1 small onion, minced**
- **7 cups fish broth**
- **2½ cups short-grain rice, preferably Valencia or bomba**
- **½ lb. small clams, cleaned**

❶ Put saffron and ¼ cup hot water in a small bowl; let sit for 15 minutes. Season monkfish with salt and pepper. Heat oil in a 16"–18" paella pan over medium-high heat. Add monkfish and langoustines and cook, turning occasionally, until golden brown, about 5 minutes; transfer monkfish and langoustines to a plate and set aside. Add cuttlefish, paprika, tomatoes, garlic, peppers, and onions to pan and cook, stirring often, until onions are soft, about 6 minutes. Add reserved saffron mixture and broth, season with salt, and bring to a boil over high heat.

Paella with rabbit and snails

Mixed paella

❷ Sprinkle in rice, distribute evenly with a spoon, and cook, without stirring, until rice has absorbed most of the liquid, 10–12 minutes. (If your pan is larger than the burner, rotate it every two minutes so different parts are over the heat and the rice cooks evenly.) Reduce heat to low, add reserved fish and langoustines, and nestle in clams hinge side down; cook, without stirring, until clams have opened and rice has absorbed the liquid and is al dente, 5–10 minutes. Remove pan from heat, cover with aluminum foil, and let sit for 5 minutes before serving.

PAELLA MIXTA

(Mixed Paella)

SERVES 6–8

This over-the-top Americanized paella (pictured above, right) gets its smoky kick from paprika and chorizo. See page 96 for sources for hard-to-find ingredients and equipment.

- **30 threads saffron, crushed (a scant ½ tsp.)**
- **1 lb. boneless skinless chicken thighs, cut into 2" pieces**
- **10 large shrimp, peeled and deveined**
- **Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste**
- **½ cup extra-virgin olive oil**
- **4 oz. dry-cured Spanish chorizo, cut into ¼"-thick coins**
- **1 tbsp. smoked paprika**
- **3 cloves garlic, minced**
- **3 dried bay leaves**
- **3 medium tomatoes, minced**
- **1 small onion, minced**
- **7 cups chicken broth**
- **2½ cups short-grain rice, preferably Valencia or bomba**
- **1 9-oz. box frozen artichoke hearts, thawed**
- **8 oz. fresh or frozen peas**
- **3 jarred roasted red peppers, torn into ½"-thick strips**
- **12 mussels, cleaned and debearded**

❶ Put saffron and ¼ cup hot water in a small bowl; let sit for 15 minutes. Season chicken and shrimp with salt and pepper. Heat oil in a 16"–18" paella pan over medium-high heat. Add chicken, shrimp, and chorizo and cook, turning occasionally, until browned, about 5 minutes. Transfer shrimp to a plate, leaving meats in pan. Add paprika, garlic, bay leaves, tomatoes, and onions to pan and cook, stirring often, until onions soften, about 6 minutes. Add reserved saffron mixture and broth, season with salt, and bring to a boil over high heat.

❷ Sprinkle in rice, distribute evenly with a spoon, and add artichokes, peas, and peppers. Cook, without stirring, until rice has absorbed most of the liquid, 10–12 minutes. (If your pan is larger than the burner, rotate it every two minutes so different parts are over the heat and the rice cooks evenly.) Reduce heat to low, add reserved shrimp, and nestle in mussels hinge side down; cook, without stirring, until mussels have opened and rice has absorbed the liquid and is al dente, 5–10 minutes more. Remove pan from heat, cover with aluminum foil, and let sit for 5 minutes before serving.

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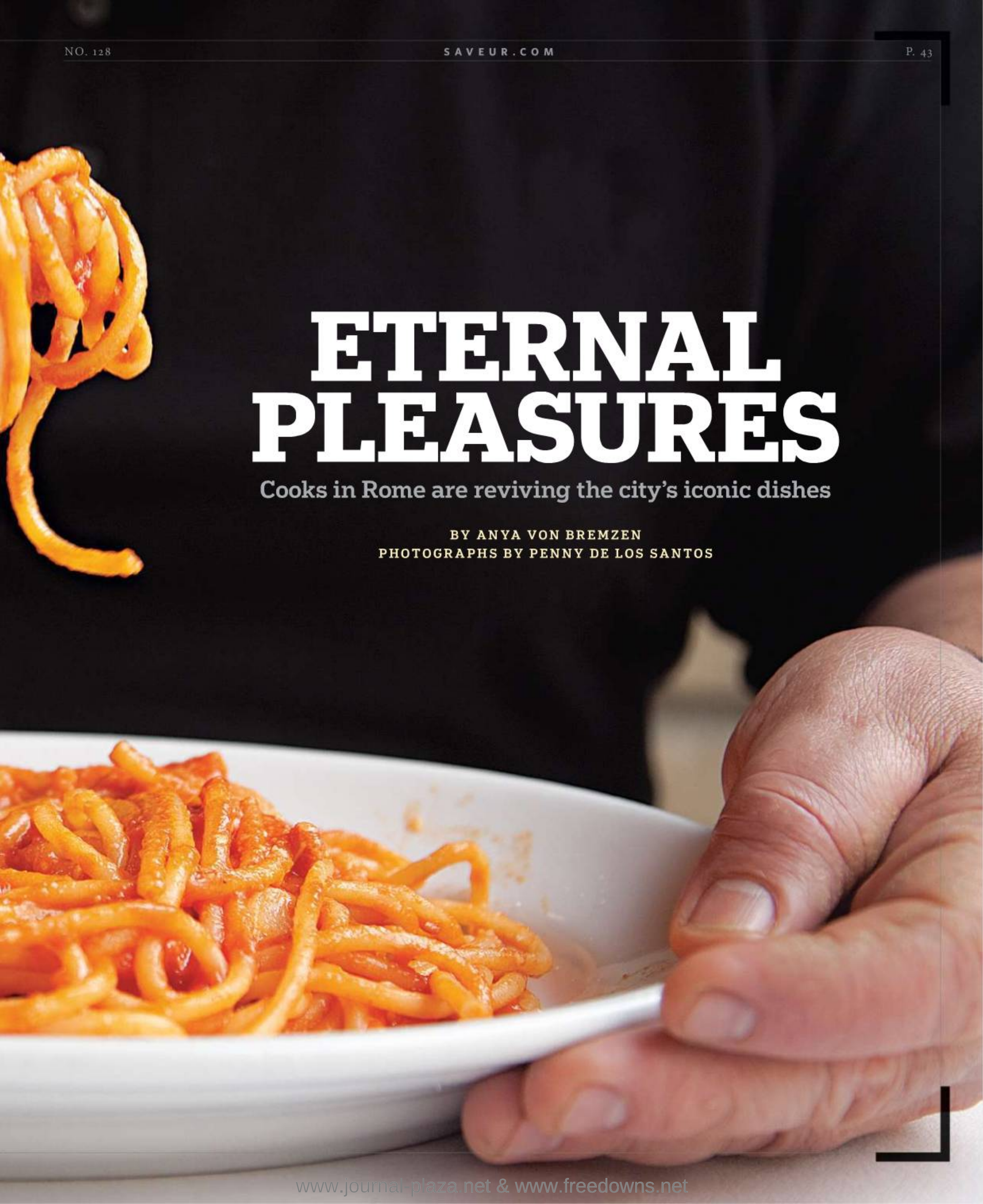

ETERNAL PLEASURES

Cooks in Rome are reviving the city's iconic dishes

BY ANYA VON BREMZEN
PHOTOGRAPHS BY PENNY DE LOS SANTOS

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A worker at the *salumeria* La Tradizione in Rome's Prati neighborhood. Previous pages, the *bucatini all'amatriciana* at the Roman restaurant Felice (see page 55 for a recipe).

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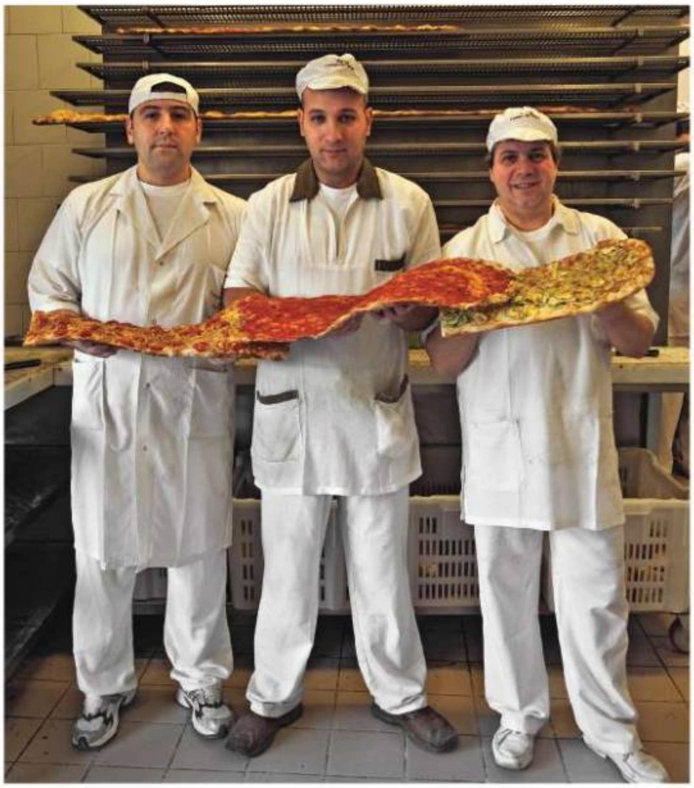

FROM LEFT: ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI; PENNY DE LOS SANTOS (3)

You have to feel it here," the dark-eyed man said to me, ardently squeezing my pulse. "And *here*." He gestured toward my heart. "One misstep—it can be ruined. But when it comes together," he cried, "it's *strepitoso* [smashing]!" In Rome such hyperbolic conversations are nothing unusual, especially when it comes to seduction or soccer. But my acquaintance, a waiter at a trattoria called Felice, was waxing rhapsodic about, of all things, *cacio e pepe*, a peppery Roman pasta dish so commonplace that until quite recently I hadn't given it much thought. In fact, over almost three decades of visits to the Italian capital, the sturdy *cucina romanesca*, with its reliable cohort of gutsy pastas and simple *secondi*, was something I'd regarded with much affection but not necessarily with reverence. As with many a Rome-struck tourist, eating was an activity I contentedly squeezed in between the Caravaggios and Borromini's Baroque architectural geometries.

All that began to change a few years ago. Felice's *cacio e pepe* certainly had something to do with it. Ditto a sumptuous oxtail stew I ate at a restaurant on Isola Tiberina, Rome's island in the Tiber River. Over the last several visits I found myself less interested in the church of San Luigi dei Francesi (those Caravaggios!) than I was in the supernal *pasta alla carbonara* at Roscioli, a place near the Campo dei Fiori. And across the Tiber, at a restaurant called L'Arcangelo in the untouristed district of Prati, I was awed by the *pasta all'amatriciana*, a dish that redefines how a pasta with tomatoes should taste.

If my appetites were reawakening to Roman food, that's because the food in the Eternal City was quietly changing, too. A younger generation of chefs and artisans was revitalizing old classics, paying tribute to a handful of Rome's canonical dishes with exalted ingredients and sharper cooking techniques. Eager to revisit and rediscover those dishes on a return trip, I decide to take a fresh approach. I'll ditch Rome's churches and statues for its bold pastas and sturdy sauces, for its grilled pork chops in a sweet-sour *agrodolce* glaze, for its gnocchi and thin, crisp *pizza bianca*, for its big globe artichokes brightened with mint or deep-fried *alla giudia* (Jewish style), for the bitterish crunch of *puntarella* chicory with anchovy sauce, and for other earthly pleasures.

I begin my stay by quizzing local experts in earnest about real Roman cooking. Virtually everyone is quick with a definition—of what it is not. Not remotely Mediterranean. Nothing to do with the baroque cuisines of the *monzù* (southern Italian court chefs). Worlds away from the opulent butter and egg–fueled cooking of the northern regions of Piedmont and Emilia-Romagna. "You have to understand," insists my friend Marco Veneziani, a local restaurant critic and an amateur historian of Roman food: "until we became the capital of unified Italy in 1870, we were two separate cities here in Rome." There was the Vatican, with its wealth, formality, and ceremonious food, and there were the *popolino*, or common folk, who merely subsisted while the papal state feasted. That's why, unlike the ducal city-states in the rest of the country, Rome never developed a refined, elaborate cooking style. "Our *cucina* was hefty because it was *povera*, for the poor," says Marco.

Marco is telling me all this at Felice, the site of my *cacio e pepe* epiphany a few years ago. Founded in 1936, the restaurant is a stalwart of the formerly working-class Testaccio neighborhood, in south-central Rome. Testaccio was once dominated by the city's main slaughterhouse, the Mattatoio, and today many Romans

Anya von Bremzen*'s most recent story for* Saveur *was "Soul of a City" (May 2009).*

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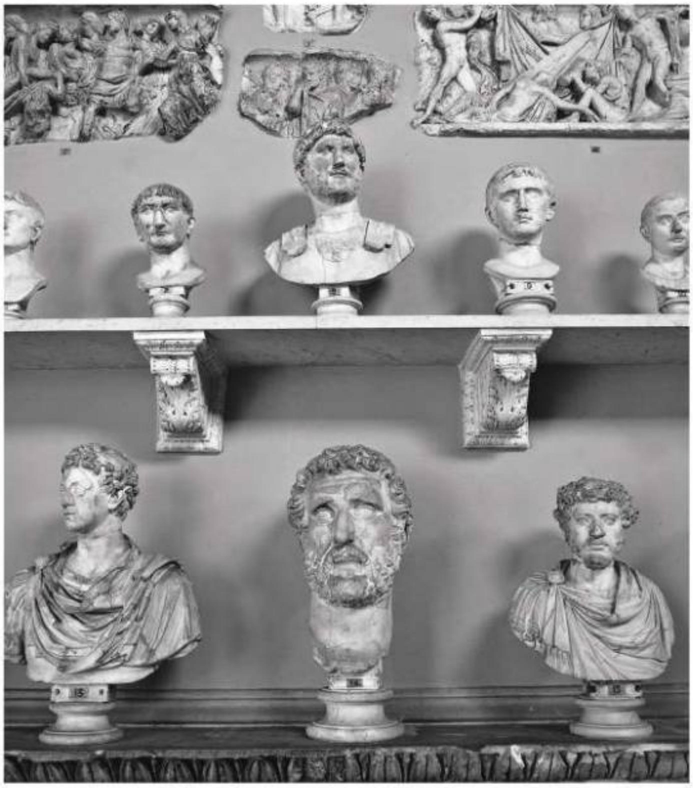

still come to the neighborhood for a subtype of their local cuisine called *quinto quarto*—literally "fifth quarter," a polite term for offal. I like *nervetti* (calf's foot tendon) as much as the next person, but I've returned to the neighborhood for Felice's *cacio e pepe*.

Along with the rest of Testaccio, the place no longer feels proletarian, but its kitchen has remained loyal to Rome's *cucina povera*, refining it ever so slightly. "Any real Roman knows the city's weekly specials by heart," Marco declares, pushing away the menu. "On Monday, *capellini in brodo*; on Thursday, gnocchi; Friday, salt cod." And every day, a quartet of Roman dishes is prepared with dried pastas: *bucatini*, rigatoni, *tonnarelli* (a kind of squared-off spaghetti), and ziti-like *mezze maniche*. The choice of sauces includes carbonara, *amatriciana*, and *cacio e pepe*, which is conjured out of nothing but olive oil, Pecorino Romano (mellowed, perhaps, with some Parmigiano), and the black pepper that's been omnipresent in Roman kitchens since antiquity.

Cacio e pepe is Rome in a pasta bowl. It's brash (the sting of the pepper, the salty bite of the cheese), gritty (experts insist that you must feel the pepper and cheese grains on your tongue), and a bit challenging (vigorous tossing is required to blend the ingredients without causing the cheese to clump up). And, of course, when it all comes together—*strepitoso*! A waiter beckons me into Felice's kitchen to see how the chef, Salvatore Tiscone, prepares his famous version. After placing a portion of cooked *tonnarelli* in a shallow bowl, Tiscone generously peppers the cooking water and splashes a couple of ladlefuls into the pasta. On top goes olive oil, along with Pecorino, Parmigiano, and more Pecorino. Then the whole is sent out to the dining room to be tossed in front of ravenous diners. The dish is a triumph, elevated by a rigorous attention to detail that belies its simplicity.

Our pasta course devoured, we move on to the *involtini in sugo*, braised beef roll-ups. It's a quintessential Roman *secondo*, Marco pronounces: "a bit of meat and tons of tomato sauce, meant to dress pasta over several days." Tiscone starts the dish with thinly pounded sheets of *la pezza*, a humble cut from the rump. Layered with a slice of prosciutto, the meat is rolled up with garlic and basil, tied, then lightly browned and slowly braised in plenty of tomato sauce. The long cooking breaks down the meat's fibers, and the *involtini* are soft enough to be cut with a spoon.

Among the many pleasures to be had at Felice are the *contorni* (side dishes), a cornerstone of Roman cuisine (see "Roman Contorni," page 48). Felice serves the obligatory roasted potatoes and *carciofi alla romana* (artichokes braised with mint and garlic), and, if it's early spring, one can start the meal with *puntarelle in salsa di alici*, a delicious tangle of curly chicory shoots with a sharp dressing of olive oil and mashed anchovies. Dessert? *Ciambelline* (ring-shaped cookies) dipped into plonky sweet wine. And that's Roman cooking—*dura e pura*.

From facing page, far left: baked gnocchi (see page 55 for a recipe); cooks at Roscioli with three kinds of pizza; oxtail stew (see page 55 for a recipe); ancient Roman busts at the Vatican Museums.

IN THE SAME FAMILY OF simple, big-flavored Roman pasta dishes, and perhaps the city's most famous, is *spaghetti alla carbonara*. Most carbonaras are just pasta, cheese, cured pork, and eggs, but the version at Roscioli, an eight-year-old wine bar and restaurant off the Campo dei Fiori (and a sister establishment of the legendary Antico Forno Roscioli, where you'll find the most exquisite *pizza bianca* in Rome), represents an evolutionary leap, at a run. In all of Italy there might not be a dish more obsessively sourced: from the slightly gamy *(continued on page 51)*

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Roman Contorni

Some of Rome's most splendid dishes are the sautéed, braised, boiled, roasted, and otherwise simply prepared vegetables that are served with most meals. Called *contorni*, these fresh, flavorful dishes round out meat and fish main courses, and they are also often served as antipasti, before meals. In *trattorie* all over town, waiters serve braised cardoons (a cousin of the artichoke), mixed local greens known as *misticanza*, and dishes like the ones featured here (see pages 56–57 for recipes). Classic *contorni* are common in home cooks' repertoires as well, though many Romans like to purchase them by weight at *tavole calde* (literally "hot table" shops). While many *contorni* are quintessentially Roman, some nod to other regional traditions, serving as tasty reminders of just how much this city acts as a culinary portal for all of Italy.
—*Dana Bowen*

Fagioli e Tonno The rich, fleshy beans known as cannellini are grown throughout the region of Lazio, of which Rome is the capital. They're used in Roman soups, in pasta dishes, as a topping for bruschetta, and in this white bean and tuna salad.

Broccoli Strascinati *Strascinati,* which means "dragged," refers to a technique for sautéeing in olive oil with plenty of garlic and chiles. This dish, which pairs beautifully with porchetta or pork chops, can be made with regular broccoli (pictured), broccoli rabe, or *broccoli romano,* known in the States as *romanesco.*

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<< Carciofi alla Romana No vegetable is as important to Roman cuisine (both ancient and modern) as the artichoke. This ubiquitous *contorno* calls for trimming down locally grown artichokes to the heart, braising them until tender, and flavoring them with mint, a popular herb in Roman kitchens.

Puntarelle in Salsa di Alici The long, white interior shoots of *puntarella*, a kind of chicory, are often sold sliced and soaked (to reduce their bitterness). Tossed with some of the vegetable's green leaves and a garlicky anchovy dressing, this dish is a great foil for rich pastas and roasted meats. ˅

<< Piselli al Prosciutto The peas that grow outside of Rome are reputed to be some of the sweetest and most tender in the country. In spring they appear in all sorts of dishes, like the fava- and artichoke-studded *vignarola* stew. Braised and sautéed with salty prosciutto, they are a classic *contorno*.

<< Finocchio con Latte al Forno Fennel, the sweet, anise-flavored bulb that turns even sweeter when cooked, is a traditional Roman ingredient. This creamy dish is rooted in the *cucina povera* technique of braising ingredients in milk to tenderize them.

Cipolline in Agrodolce You'll find this ancient sweet-sour preparation of onions across Italy (particularly in Lazio), but the dish is beloved in Rome, where it pairs naturally with roasted meats like porchetta. >>

<< Peperonata In spring and summer, crates of peppers grown around Lazio come to market, and cooks prepare this sweet, simple pepper stew to serve alongside meats and fish. *Peperonata* also makes a great antipasto atop bruschetta, perfect with a glass of local white falesco wine.

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(continued from page 47) *guanciale del Conero* (from a nearby town that's known for its version of those cured pork jowls) that's cut into thick squares and seared without oil, to the duo of local Pecorino cheeses (Romano and Moliterno), to the perfectly textured durum wheat *spaghettoni* from a tiny producer in the nearby Abruzzo region. Most crucially, the eggs come from Paolo Parisi. This perfectionist Tuscan farmer feeds goats' milk to his hens to achieve a lean, compact yolk, one that conveys a surprising suggestion of almonds. The final touch—three different kinds of black pepper, from Jamaica, China, and India—cunningly renovates this *cucina povera* staple. "A great carbonara is all in the balance of flavors," the chef, a Tunisian-born Roman named Nabil Hassen, tells me. "No single ingredient should stand out." Eating his carbonara is like discovering the dish for the very first time: the *guanciale* pops in your mouth, the eggs create a silky sauce, and the peppers add a faintly exotic, lingering kick.

Roscioli also makes a stupendous *amatriciana*, a lush, zesty tomato-and-onion-based pasta sauce that's flavored with *guanciale*, but it's even better at L'Arcangelo, a sedate restaurant in the Prati district. There, the chef-owners, Arcangelo and Stefania Dandini, have breathed new life into this folkloric red sauce. Gratings of excellent Pecorino give the sauce a surprising depth; the *guanciale*, this one from the jowl of a Tuscan Cinta Senese pig, lends it a dusky complexity; and sweet, organic tomatoes give it a bright flavor without imparting the sharp acidity that's a trait of most versions of the sauce.

The *amatriciana* at L'Arcangelo is a paragon of elegance, and this leaves me wondering: Does *cucina povera* lose its essence when you aesthetisize it? What is more authentic: to eat indifferent food prepared from frozen ingredients at a neighborhood trattoria, or to revel in the newfound respect for tradition at bourgeois places that charge more than 30 bucks for a portion of tripe? As if reading my mind, Arcangelo Dandini tells me that good-quality Roman essentials like salt cod, offal, and fresh vegetables were once dirt cheap and as abundant as water. Now, he says, one has to pay through the nose for that organic tomato. To preserve traditional cooking—this takes research, dedication, and money, he adds.

The same preservationist ethos rules at the historic Sora Lella *(continued on page 54)*

Diners at Sora Lella, a 51-year-old restaurant on Isola Tiberina, an island in the Tiber River.

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Above, from left: a cook at Felice preparing a plate of *cacio e pepe*, a simple dish of noodles, cheese, oil, and black pepper that author Anya von Bremzen calls "Rome in a pasta bowl"; stuffed beef in tomato sauce. (See pages 55–56 for recipes.)

Above, from left: *maiale agrodolce*, or sweet and sour glazed pork chops (see page 56 for a recipe); nuns en route to the Holy City. Facing page, the pillars of Rome's Pantheon frame the Piazza della Rotonda at night.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: PENNY DE LOS SANTOS; ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI; PENNY DE LOS SANTOS; MICHAEL KRAUS; FACING PAGE: PENNY DE LOS SANTOS

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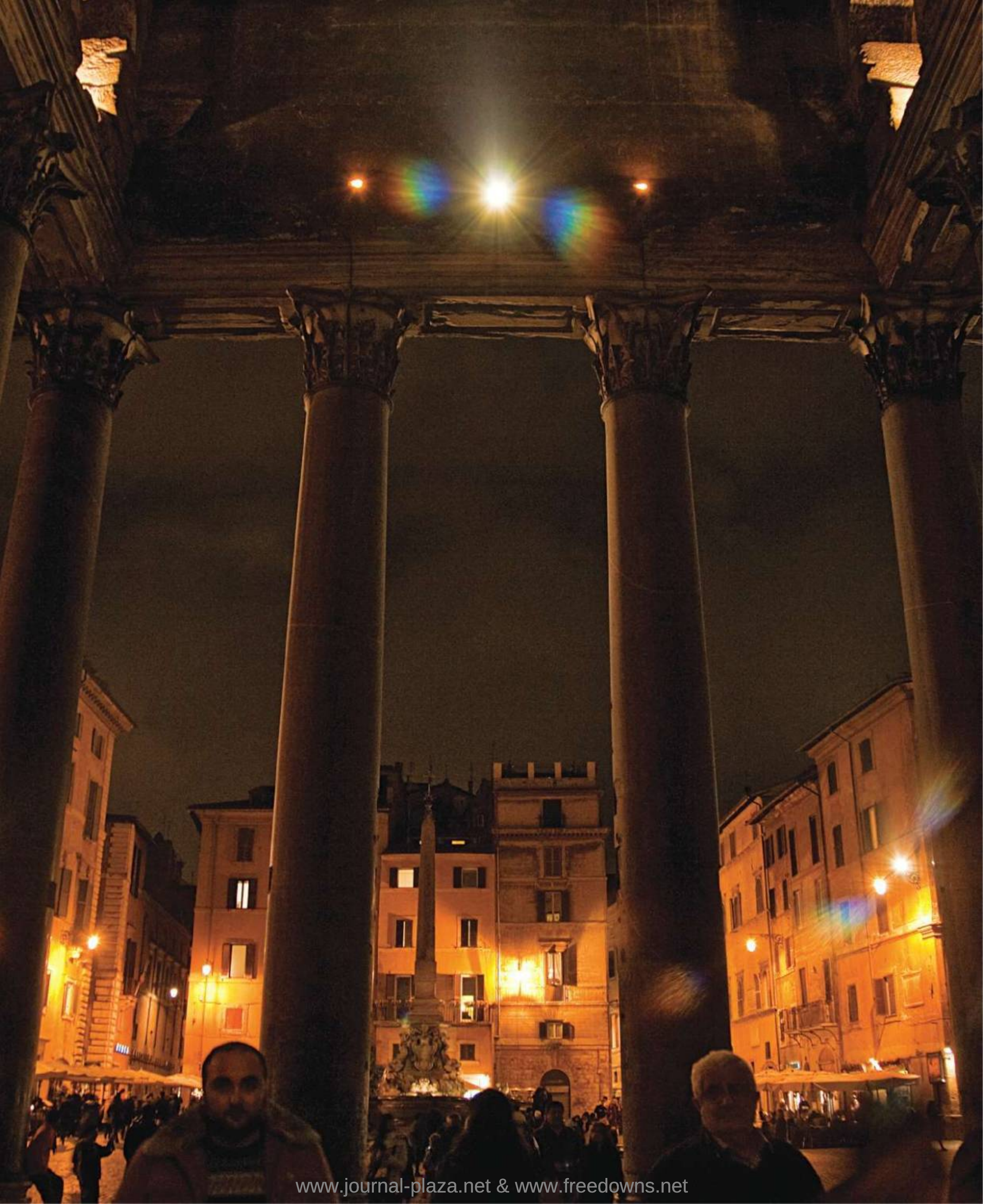

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Above, from left: *spaghetti alla carbonara* (see page 56 for a recipe); Anna Dente, the chef-owner of Osteria di San Cesario, serves rigatoni with veal intestines and tomatoes.

FROM LEFT: ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI; PENNY DE LOS SANTOS

(continued from page 51) restaurant on Isola Tiberina, home to what may be the ultimate *coda alla vaccinara*, a long-cooked oxtail stew that's one of Rome's slaughterhouse-district classics (a *vaccinaro* is a slaughterhouse worker). I ask one of Sora Lella's chef-owners, Mauro Trabalza, to talk me through his recipe, and I'm struck once again by the attention to detail. Like most Italian stews, his begins with a *battuto* (fried mixture) of carrots, onions, and celery. The celery, Trabalza points out, lends a mellow depth to the dish and tempers the strong taste of the meat. Once the meaty oxtails are blanched to render out some of their fat and then browned, the prepared *battuto* is added. Next, he simmers them short of forever with white wine, crushed tomatoes, water, and a touch of bay leaf and clove, which further sweeten the sauce and counter the tomato's acidity. At the end he adds a grating of bitter chocolate or cinnamon that beautifully rounds up all the flavors. The resulting stew is a mound of burnished, fall-apart meat in a rich, subtly spice-infused sauce. At Sora Lella you can also savor soft, springy veal *polpette* (meatballs) swathed in tomato sauce, and an excellent rendition of *gnocchi alla romana*, pillowy baked semolina or potato dumplings, which is a kind of comfort food I could eat every day.

NOW FORGET ALL YOU'VE read. For a taste of the greatest Roman food on the planet, you must leave the imperial city behind and head southeast. After about 25 miles you'll come to the nondescript town of San Cesareo, in the Lazio countryside. Here you'll find a veritable museum of ethnographic Roman-Lazio flavors, at a rustic but elegant place called Osteria di San Cesario, a restaurant that sums up perfectly the new direction of Roman cuisine.

The restaurant's guiding spirit and chef, Anna Dente, is larger than life, fond of red toques and of arm gestures so expansive you'll be afraid to get in her way when she talks. And talk she will. About being a butcher before becoming a chef, cleaning innards for 42 years in her dad's shop. About Roman cuisine being shaped as much by Lazio's shepherds and farmers as by Testaccio's slaughterhouse workers. About the importance of Lazio's kitchen gardens to the cooking of Rome.

With her butchering background, Dente is a queen of *quinto quarto* cooking, but she also pays special attention to legumes and seasonal vegetables, most of them grown nearby. Her *acqua cotta* soup, loaded with squash sprouts, onions, zucchini, tomatoes, beans, and garlic and topped with fried bread and *baccalà* (salt cod), is a *cucina povera* masterpiece; the same can be said for her soft heirloom *borlotti* beans laced with gelatinous slivers of pig's ear.

The dinner at San Cesario is my *arrivederci* to the region, and I'm joined by my pals Marco Bolasco, the director of publications at Slow Food, and Bob Noto, a food photographer who has flown down specially from Turin. We feast on pastas, such as the toothsome fettuccine with mutton, prepared by Dente's 90-year-old mother, Maria, with special flours they get straight from the mill; on sweetbreads with porcini mushrooms; and on a polenta pizza with wild herbs. After dinner, over homemade fennel liqueur, Dente regales us with tales of the time she was flown to Hollywood to cook for a promotional event for Italy's famed Cinecittà film studio. "The one who loved me most," she cries, "was, you know, the bearded director: Spilembergo!" On our drive back to Rome we're still laughing about it. "Signor Spielberg, he does have good taste," Bob says. And then we all talk about what we've just eaten and say "*strepitoso.*" We say it a lot.

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BUCATINI ALL'AMATRICIANA

(Bucatini with Spicy Tomato Sauce)

SERVES 4

This dish (pictured on page 42) is flavored with guanciale, or cured pork jowl (see below right), though pancetta is a fine substitute.

- **3 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil**
- **4 oz. thinly sliced guanciale or pancetta, cut into ¾" pieces (see page 96)**
- **Freshly cracked black pepper, to taste**
- **2 cloves garlic, minced**
- **1 small carrot, minced**
- **½ medium onion, minced**
- **½ tsp. crushed red chile flakes**
- **1 28-oz. can peeled tomatoes, preferably San Marzano, undrained and puréed**
- **Kosher salt, to taste**
- **1 lb. bucatini or spaghetti**
- **1¼ cups grated Pecorino Romano**

❶ Heat oil in a large, high-sided skillet over medium heat. Add guanciale; cook, stirring, until lightly browned, 6–8 minutes. Add pepper; cook until fragrant, about 2 minutes more. Increase heat to medium-high; add garlic, carrots, and onions and cook, stirring occasionally, until soft, about 6 minutes. Add chile flakes; cook for 1 minute. Stir in tomatoes, reduce heat to medium-low, and simmer, stirring occasionally, until sauce thickens and flavors meld, 20–25 minutes. Season with salt; keep warm.

❷ Bring a 6-qt. pot of salted water to a boil. Add pasta and cook until just al dente, 6–8 minutes. Reserve ½ cup pasta water; drain pasta. Heat reserved sauce over medium heat. Add pasta and reserved water; cook, tossing, until sauce clings to pasta, 2–3 minutes. Add ½ cup Pecorino; toss. Divide between serving bowls; serve with remaining Pecorino.

CACIO E PEPE

(Cheese and Pepper Pasta)

SERVES 4

Less is more in this elemental pasta dish (pictured on page 52), which takes on spiciness from cracked pepper toasted in oil (see page 88).

- **Kosher salt, to taste**
- **1 lb. pasta, preferably tonnarelli or spaghetti**
- **4 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil**
- **2 tsp. freshly cracked black pepper, plus more to taste**
- **1 cup finely grated Pecorino Romano**
- **¾ cup finely grated Cacio de Roma (see page 96)**

Bring a 6-qt. pot of salted water to a boil. Add pasta; cook until al dente, 8–10 minutes; reserve 1 cup pasta water and drain pasta. Meanwhile, heat oil in a 12" skillet over medium heat until shimmering. Add pepper; cook until fragrant, 1–2 minutes. Ladle ¾ cup pasta water into skillet; bring to a boil. Using tongs, transfer pasta to skillet; spread it evenly. Sprinkle ¾ cup each Pecorino Romano and Cacio de Roma over pasta; toss vigorously to combine until sauce is creamy and clings to the pasta without clumping, about 2 minutes, adding some pasta water if necessary. Transfer to 4 plates and sprinkle with remaining Pecorino and more pepper.

Pairing Note A medium-bodied sangiovese, like the 2005 Brancaia Tre Toscana ($21), will complement this dish's peppery notes.

CODA ALLA VACCINARA

(Roman Oxtail Stew)

SERVES 4

After braising, these oxtails (pictured on page 47) yield tender meat and a rich stew. Ask your butcher to cut the oxtails into 2½" pieces.

- **2½ lbs. oxtails, cut into 2½" pieces**
- **Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste**
- **4 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil**
- **4 oz. pancetta or guanciale, minced**
- **6 ribs celery (5 whole, 1 minced)**
- **5 whole cloves**
- **2 cloves garlic, minced**
- **1 medium carrot, minced**
- **1 small white onion, minced**
- **1 dried bay leaf**
- **2 tbsp. tomato paste**
- **1¼ cups red wine, such as chianti**
- **1 28-oz. can whole peeled plum tomatoes, preferably San Marzano, undrained and crushed by hand**
- **⅛ tsp. ground cinnamon, plus more to taste**
- **Crusty bread or pasta, for serving**

Season oxtails with salt and pepper. Heat oil in a 5-qt. Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Add oxtails; cook, turning once, until browned, 8–10 minutes. Transfer to a plate. Put pancetta, minced celery, cloves, garlic, carrots, onions, and bay leaf into Dutch oven and cook, stirring, until soft, 5–6 minutes. Add tomato paste; cook, stirring, for 6 minutes. Add wine, bring to a boil; cook until evaporated, about 5 minutes. Add oxtails along with tomatoes and 1½ cups water. Reduce heat to medium-low; simmer, covered, for 2 hours. Add whole celery; cook over medium heat, uncovered, until celery is tender, about 40 minutes. Stir in cinnamon and season with salt and pepper. Transfer oxtails to plates and spoon some of sauce and celery on top. Serve with crusty bread.

Pairing Note Try an acidic, full-bodied barbera, like the 2006 Canalegrande Barbera & Bonarda from Emilia-Romagna ($20).

GNOCCHI ALLA ROMANA

SERVES 4

The recipe for these flat semolina gnocchi (pictured on page 46) is an adaptation of one in David Downie's *Cooking the Roman Way* (HarperCollins, 2002).

- **4 cups milk**
- **1½ cups semolina (about 8 oz.)**
- **1½ cups finely grated Parmesan**
- **8 tbsp. unsalted butter, softened**
- **2 egg yolks, beaten**
- **Kosher salt, to taste**

❶ In a 5-qt. pot over medium-high heat, bring milk

GUANCIALE

Cured pork jowl, known as *guanciale*, is an essential ingredient in many Roman pasta dishes, including *spaghetti alla carbonara* (see recipe on page 56) and *bucatini all'amatriciana* (see recipe at left). But it can also be rendered and sautéed with vegetables, added to stewed fava beans, or cooked with meat or fish so that its fragrant fat suffuses the dish. Usually sold whole (as pictured above), *guanciale* has a flavor that is less salty but stronger and fattier than its meaty cousin pancetta—Italian salt-cured pork belly—and a texture that's somewhat softer. While *guanciale*, which can be cured with everything from black pepper to spices, is traditionally unsmoked, smoked versions are popular nowadays in Rome. Smoked *guanciale* isn't readily available in the United States, but Mauro Trabalza, the chef at Sora Lella, a restaurant in Rome that has an outpost in New York City, recommends a mixture of three parts regular *guanciale* or pancetta to one part bacon to approximate the flavor of smoked *guanciale*. Once hard to find in this country, *guanciale* is an increasingly common house-made specialty in U.S. restaurants and butcher shops. (See THE PANTRY, page 96, for a source.) —*Mari Uyehara*

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to a simmer while stirring. Reduce heat to low; slowly whisk in semolina. Cook, whisking, until tender, 8–10 minutes. Whisk in ½ cup Parmesan, 4 tbsp. butter, and yolks; season with salt. Remove from heat.

❷ Wet a 15" x 10" rimmed baking sheet with a soaked paper towel. Pour semolina mixture onto baking sheet; smooth surface with spatula to ½" thickness. Let cool until firm, about 40 minutes.

❸ Heat oven to 450°. Using a knife, cut gnocchi dough in 2" squares; transfer half of the squares to a buttered 9" x 13" baking pan. Sprinkle gnocchi with ¼ cup Parmesan and dot with 2 tbsp. butter. Layer remaining gnocchi on top and sprinkle with ¼ cup cheese and remaining butter. Bake until golden, about 15 minutes. Serve with remaining cheese.

INVOLTINI IN SUGO

(Stuffed Beef in Tomato Sauce)

SERVES 2

This main course (pictured on page 52) calls for rolling thin cuts of beef around a mixture of garlic, Pecorino Romano, basil, and prosciutto, braising them until tender, and finishing them in a quick tomato sauce.

4 4-oz. beef scaloppine from top round, pounded to 3⁄16" thickness
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
5 cloves garlic, minced
¼ cup finely grated Pecorino Romano
4 thin slices prosciutto
7 fresh basil leaves
¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
1 onion, minced
¼ cup tomato paste
½ cup red wine
1 cup beef broth
1 28-oz. can whole peeled tomatoes, preferably San Marzano, undrained and puréed

❶ Working with one piece of beef at a time, season beef with salt and pepper and rub with ½ tsp. garlic. Sprinkle with 1 tbsp. Pecorino; top with 1 piece of prosciutto and a basil leaf. Working from one short edge of beef, roll beef into a cylinder. Secure with toothpicks. Repeat to make 4 rolls; set aside.

❷ Heat oil in a 12" skillet over high heat. Add beef; cook, turning, until browned, about 6 minutes. Transfer to a plate. Reduce heat to medium; add onions and remaining garlic; cook until soft, 5–6 minutes. Add tomato paste; cook, stirring, for 3 minutes. Remove pan from heat, add wine; return pan to medium-high heat. Cook until wine has evaporated, about 1 minute. Add broth; bring to a boil. Add beef and remaining basil; bring to a boil; reduce heat to low. Cover and simmer until beef is tender, about 1 hour 15 minutes. Transfer beef to 2 plates and remove toothpicks; cover with foil. Add tomatoes to skillet, bring to a boil, and season with salt and pepper. To serve, uncover beef and ladle tomato sauce over the top.

Pairing Note A big red with sweet fruit, such as the 2005 Amarone Classico "Costasera" from Masi ($64), will hold its own with this saucy *secondo*.

MAIALE IN AGRODOLCE

(Sweet and Sour Glazed Pork Chops)

SERVES 4

These grilled pork chops (pictured on page 52) pair well with peperonata (see facing page).

4 10-oz. bone-in pork chops, frenched
3 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
⅓ cup balsamic vinegar
2 tbsp. honey
4 tbsp. unsalted butter
1 sprig fresh rosemary, torn into 1" pieces

Put pork chops on a plate; drizzle with oil; season generously with salt and pepper; let sit for 30 minutes. Meanwhile, build a medium-hot fire in a charcoal grill or heat a gas grill to medium-high heat. Combine vinegar and honey in a 1-qt. saucepan and cook over medium heat until reduced to ¼ cup. Stir in butter and rosemary and set aside. Put pork chops on grill and cook, occasionally turning and basting with balsamic mixture, until browned and cooked through, 12–14 minutes. Transfer to a platter and let sit for 5 minutes before serving.

SPAGHETTI ALLA CARBONARA

SERVES 4

To make this dish (pictured on page 54) the traditional way, toss together the cheese, eggs, pepper, and pork in a bowl to create a thick sauce.

4 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
4 oz. thinly sliced guanciale or pancetta cut into ½" pieces (see page 96)
2 tsp. freshly cracked black pepper, plus more to taste
1¾ cups finely grated Parmesan
1 egg plus 3 yolks
Kosher salt, to taste
1 lb. spaghetti

❶ Heat oil in a 10" skillet over medium heat. Add guanciale and cook, stirring occasionally, until lightly browned, 6–8 minutes. Add pepper and cook, stirring occasionally, until fragrant, 2 minutes more. Transfer guanciale mixture to a large bowl and let cool slightly; stir in 1½ cups Parmesan and egg and yolks and stir to combine; set aside.

❷ Meanwhile, bring a 6-qt. pot of salted water to a boil. Add pasta; cook until al dente, 8–10 minutes. Reserve ¾ cup water; drain pasta and transfer it to guanciale mixture. Toss, adding pasta water a little at a time to make a creamy sauce. Season with salt and pepper; serve with remaining Parmesan.

Contorni

The following side dishes, or *contorni*, are pictured on pages 48 and 49. The recipes for the fennel, the sweet peas and prosciutto, and the white bean and tuna salad come from Jo Bettoja's *In a Roman Kitchen* (Wiley, 2003).

BROCCOLI STRASCINATI

(Broccoli with Garlic and Hot Pepper)

SERVES 2–4

¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
1 bunch broccoli (about 1 lb.), stemmed and cut into florets
3 cloves garlic, smashed
½ tsp. crushed red chile flakes
Kosher salt, to taste

Heat oil in a 12" skillet over medium-high heat. Add broccoli; cook, turning occasionally, until lightly browned, 6–8 minutes. Sprinkle in 2 tbsp. water; add garlic; cook until golden, 2–3 minutes. Add chile; cook until toasted, about 2 minutes. Season with salt.

CARCIOFI ALLA ROMANA

(Braised Artichoke Hearts with Mint)

SERVES 6

6 large trimmed artichoke hearts with stems
2 cups white wine
1 cup extra-virgin olive oil
3 tbsp. minced fresh flat-leaf parsley
3 tbsp. minced mint leaves
2 tbsp. fresh lemon juice
4 cloves garlic, minced
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

Place artichokes in a 3-qt. saucepan along with wine, oil, parsley, mint, lemon juice, garlic, and 2 cups water. Season with salt and pepper and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium-low and simmer artichokes, turning occasionally, until tender, 15–20 minutes. To

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serve, transfer artichokes stem side up to a platter and drizzle with some of the cooking liquid.

CIPOLLINE IN AGRODOLCE

(Sweet and Sour Onions)

SERVES 4-6

- **½ cup raisins**
- **3 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil**
- **1½ lbs. cipolline or pearl onions, peeled**
- **¼ cup balsamic vinegar**
- **1½ tbsp. sugar**
- **Kosher salt, to taste**

Put raisins into a small bowl; cover with hot water and let soften for 30 minutes. Heat oil in a 12" skillet over medium-high heat. Add onions and cook until golden brown, 8–10 minutes; pour off oil. Drain raisins. Add raisins, vinegar, and sugar and season with salt. Cook, stirring, until sauce thickens, 2–3 minutes.

FAGIOLI E TONNO

(White Bean and Tuna Salad)

SERVES 4

- **½ lb. dried cannellini beans, soaked overnight**
- **6 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil**
- **2 tbsp. red wine vinegar**
- **2 cloves garlic, minced**
- **Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste**
- **2 tbsp. roughly chopped flat-leaf parsley**
- **1-2 5.5-oz. cans tuna in olive oil, drained**

Drain beans, transfer to a 4-qt. pot, and cover with water by 3". Bring to a boil, reduce heat to medium-low; simmer until tender, 45–50 minutes. Drain beans, reserving ¼ cup cooking liquid. Whisk together oil, vinegar, and garlic in a bowl. Combine vinegar mixture, beans, and cooking liquid; season with salt and pepper; transfer to a bowl. Garnish with parsley and chunks of tuna.

FINOCCHIO CON LATTE AL FORNO

(Fennel Baked in Milk)

SERVES 4-6

- **3 medium bulbs fennel, fronds reserved**
- **4 cups milk**
- **4 tbsp. unsalted butter**
- **1 tsp. fennel seeds, crushed**
- **Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste**
- **1 cup freshly grated Parmesan**

Heat oven to 475°. Remove tough outer layer of fennel. Halve bulbs lengthwise and cut into ½" wedges. Combine fennel, milk, and 2 tbsp. butter in a 4-qt. saucepan over medium-high heat and cook, stirring occasionally, until fennel is just tender, 30–45 minutes. Add fennel seeds and season with salt and pepper. Using a slotted spoon, transfer fennel to a 2-quart oval baking dish; pour 1 cup of the milk mixture over fennel. Sprinkle with Parmesan, dot with remaining butter, and bake until golden brown and bubbly, about 20 minutes. Serve fennel garnished with some of the fronds.

PEPERONATA

(Stewed Sweet Peppers)

MAKES 2 CUPS

- **⅓ cup extra-virgin olive oil**
- **4 assorted red, yellow, and orange bell peppers, cored, seeded, and cut into ¼" strips**
- **4 cloves garlic, thinly sliced crosswise**
- **½ medium white onion, thinly sliced**
- **Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste**
- **3 tbsp. red wine vinegar**

Heat oil in a 4-qt. saucepan over medium-high heat. Add peppers, garlic, onions, and ½ cup water and season with salt and pepper. Cook, partially covered and stirring occasionally, until peppers are soft, about 1 hour. Stir in vinegar and transfer to a serving bowl.

PISELLI AL PROSCIUTTO

(Sweet Peas with Prosciutto)

SERVES 4

- **¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil**
- **2 oz. prosciutto, roughly chopped**
- **1 small white onion, minced**
- **1 lb. fresh or frozen green peas**
- **Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste**

Heat oil in a 12" skillet over medium heat. Add prosciutto and onions; cook until onions are soft and prosciutto begins to crisp, 6–8 minutes. Add peas and 1 tbsp. water; cook, tossing, until hot, about 3 minutes. Season with salt and pepper.

PUNTARELLE IN SALSA DI ALICI

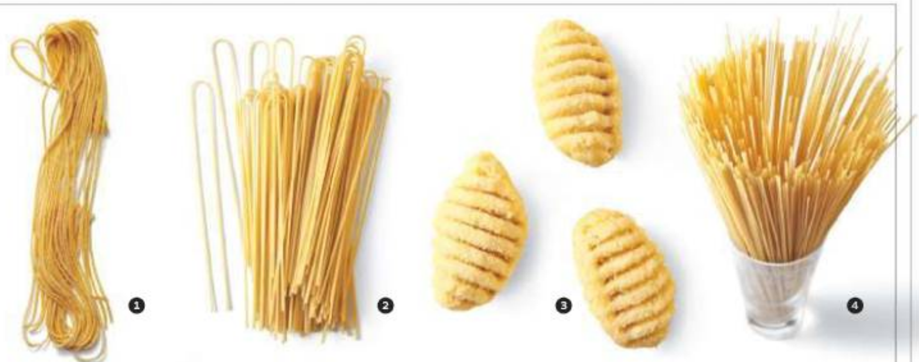
(Chicory in Anchovy Sauce)

SERVES 4

- **8 oz. young puntarelle or dandelion greens, trimmed and thinly sliced (see page 96)**
- **4 anchovy filets**
- **1 clove garlic, minced**
- **6 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil**
- **3 tbsp. red or white wine vinegar**
- **Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste**

Put puntarelle into a bowl of ice water; let sit for 1 hour. Meanwhile, finely chop and smash anchovies and garlic to make a paste; whisk in oil and vinegar to make a smooth dressing. Season with salt and pepper. Drain puntarelle and pat dry; toss with dressing.

ROMAN PASTA VARIETIES



Rome is famous for its sturdy durum-wheat dried pastas, which stand up to vigorous tossing; the best varieties have a rough-textured surface that soaks up sauces well. ❶ *Tonnarelli* is a square noodle often made with eggs; many Roman cooks prefer *tonnarelli* for the peppery pasta dish called *cacio e pepe* (see page 55 for a recipe) and for partnering with certain tomato-based sauces. ❷ The hollow noodle known as *bucatini*, a dried pasta made from durum wheat and water, is among the most classically Roman shapes; in the dish known as *bucatini all'amatriciana* (see recipe on page 55), it is paired with a tangy tomato sauce. ❸ Gnocchi, whose name literally means "little lumps," are dumpling-like pastas made, variously, from potatoes, semolina flour, or even spinach and ricotta; in Rome you'll find plump gnocchi like the ones above, as well as *gnocchi alla romana*, which are usually flat disks or squares (pictured on page 46; see page 55 for a recipe). ❹ Spaghetti can hardly be called a regional food anymore, but in Rome it is quasi-sacred, especially in that luscious cheese-and-egg-sauce pasta dish, *spaghetti alla carbonara* (see page 56 for a recipe). —*Mari Uyehara*

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Rome

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Inexpensive Under $20 **Moderate** $20–$80 **Expensive** Over $80

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WHERE TO STAY

HASSLER ROMA piazza Trinità dei Monti 6 (39/6/699-340; www.hotelhassler.com). Rates: $620 double. The prominent hotelier Roberto Wirth runs this grand yet intimate 95-room hotel located above the Spanish Steps. Its restaurant, Imàgo, has breathtaking views of the city.

HOTEL MEDITERRANEO via Cavour 15 (39/6/488-4051; www.romehotelmediterraneo.it). Rates: $200–$250 double. This centrally located hotel, in the city's Esquilino neighborhood, contains a treasure trove of lovingly preserved art deco details and offers pleasantly old-school service.

WHERE TO EAT

CRISTALLI DI ZUCCHERO via di San Teodoro 88 (39/6/6992-0945). Inexpensive. This pastry shop near the Piazza del Campidoglio sells feather-light cream-filled breakfast *cornetti* prepared with sourdough leavening, as well as *cassata Siciliana* (a sponge cake) made with sheep's milk ricotta.

DA OIO A CASA MIA via Galvani 43–45 (39/6/578-2680). Expensive. The Roman classics at this raucous neighborhood trattoria—from the *cacio e pepe* (an elemental dish of pasta, cheese, and coarse black pepper) to the *lingua in salmì* (poached tongue with sharp, vinegary sauce)—are among the most faithful renditions you'll find.

FELICE via Mastro Giorgio 27–29 (39/6/574-6800). Expensive. Owned by the same family since 1936, this bustling trattoria is located in the Testaccio district. The prices are good, the food is truly Roman, and the clientele is a colorful mix of hipsters and old-timers. Reserve well in advance.

MAP: THE M FACTORY

GELATERIA DEI GRACCHI via dei Gracchi 272 (39/6/321-6668). Inexpensive. Locals gather in great numbers at this small shop in the Prati district for frozen treats prepared strictly with seasonal fruits, and for the rich, creamy gelati made with ingredients like Bronte pistachios.

L'ARCANGELO via Giuseppe Gioacchino Belli 59 (39/6/321-0992). Expensive. At this cozy, 13-table restaurant, on a quiet street in the residential district of Prati, owners Arcangelo and Stefania Dandini are breathing new life into traditional Roman cooking. Besides an excellent *bombolotti all'amatriciana*, they also serve outstanding tripe and fabulous lamb dishes.

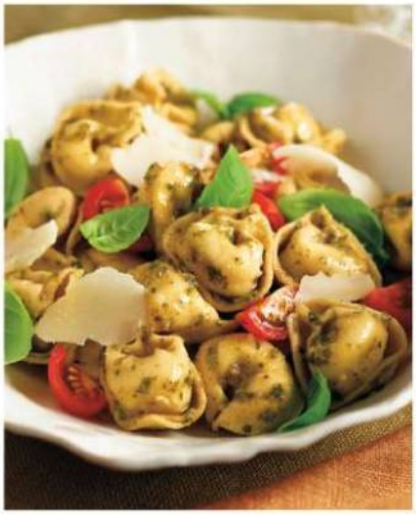
OSTERIA DI SAN CESARIO via F. Corridoni 60, San Cesareo (39/6/958-7950). Expensive. Anna Dente might be the greatest cook in the Lazio region; it's worth a train or car ride to visit her osteria in San Cesareo, 25 miles southeast of Rome. From the pasta, handmade by Dente's mother, to offal-and-vegetable dishes like *borlotti* beans and pig's ear, every bite here is superb.

PERILLI via Marmorata 39 (39/6/574-2415). Expensive. Elegant, cavernous, and tended to by a seasoned, all-male waitstaff, this Testaccio institution excels in Rome's traditional *quinto quarto* (offal) preparations. The sweetbreads—crisp, perfectly browned, and brightened with a squeeze of lemon—are exceptional.

PIZZARIUM via della Meloria 43 (39/6/3974-5416). Moderate. In this tiny space in the Prati district, a brilliant *pizzaiolo* named Gabriele Bonci bakes Rome's best *pizza al taglio* (pizza baked in slabs and sold by weight) from dough made with ancient sourdough starters.

RISTORANTE ROSCIOLI via dei Giubbonari 21 (39/6/687-5287). Expensive. The deli connected to this eight-year-old restaurant carries selections of Italy's finest artisanal charcuterie, cheeses, and dried pastas. The dining room itself, in the back, serves some of Rome's best pasta dishes and cold cuts and pairs them with excellent wines. At the owners' bakery, Antico Forno Roscioli (around the corner at via dei Chiavari 34), you can buy dark, burnished loaves of *pane di lariano* and light, chewy *pizza bianca* (a tomato-less pie).

SORA LELLA via di Ponte Quattro Capi 16 (39/6/686-1601). Moderate. Consisting of a series of cozy rooms, this half-century-old restaurant is located on Isola Tiberina, the island in the Tiber River. Here, you'll find subtly tweaked versions of traditional Roman specialties, including *coda alla vaccinara* (oxtail stew) and *polpette* (meatballs).



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QUEEN OF SPICES

Sweet, strong, and invigorating, cardamom is one of the world's most prized ingredients

When I was a child in Delhi, India, cardamom was as familiar as the air I breathed. Its sweet, woodsy perfume regularly filled the house when my parents were cooking. But it took me a while to appreciate the spice's flavor. "Too strong for me," I would say as I picked the pale green cardamom pods out of any rice dish or curry that was placed before me. It wasn't until I got a bit older and started drinking *masala chai*, India's ubiquitous brew of tea, milk, and spice, that I began to come around. Each Indian home has its own version, its own mix of flavoring spices. My father's *chai* was spiced only with cardamom, and plenty of it. He'd use a mortar and pestle to crush the pods and release their flavor before steeping them with the strong black tea. Perhaps it was the richness of the milk that made the difference: it seemed to both soften and deepen the flavor of the spice. All at once I was able to discern the cardamom's penetrating warmth and the way its complex flavor of pine, sweet musk, and bright citrus was awakened by the bitterness of the tea. » After my family moved from India to Bahrain, in the Persian Gulf, I discovered *gahwa*, the fragrant Arabic cardamom coffee, and *(continued on page 65)*

By Monica Bhide

{**The Spice Chronicles:** The second in a series celebrating everyday spices}

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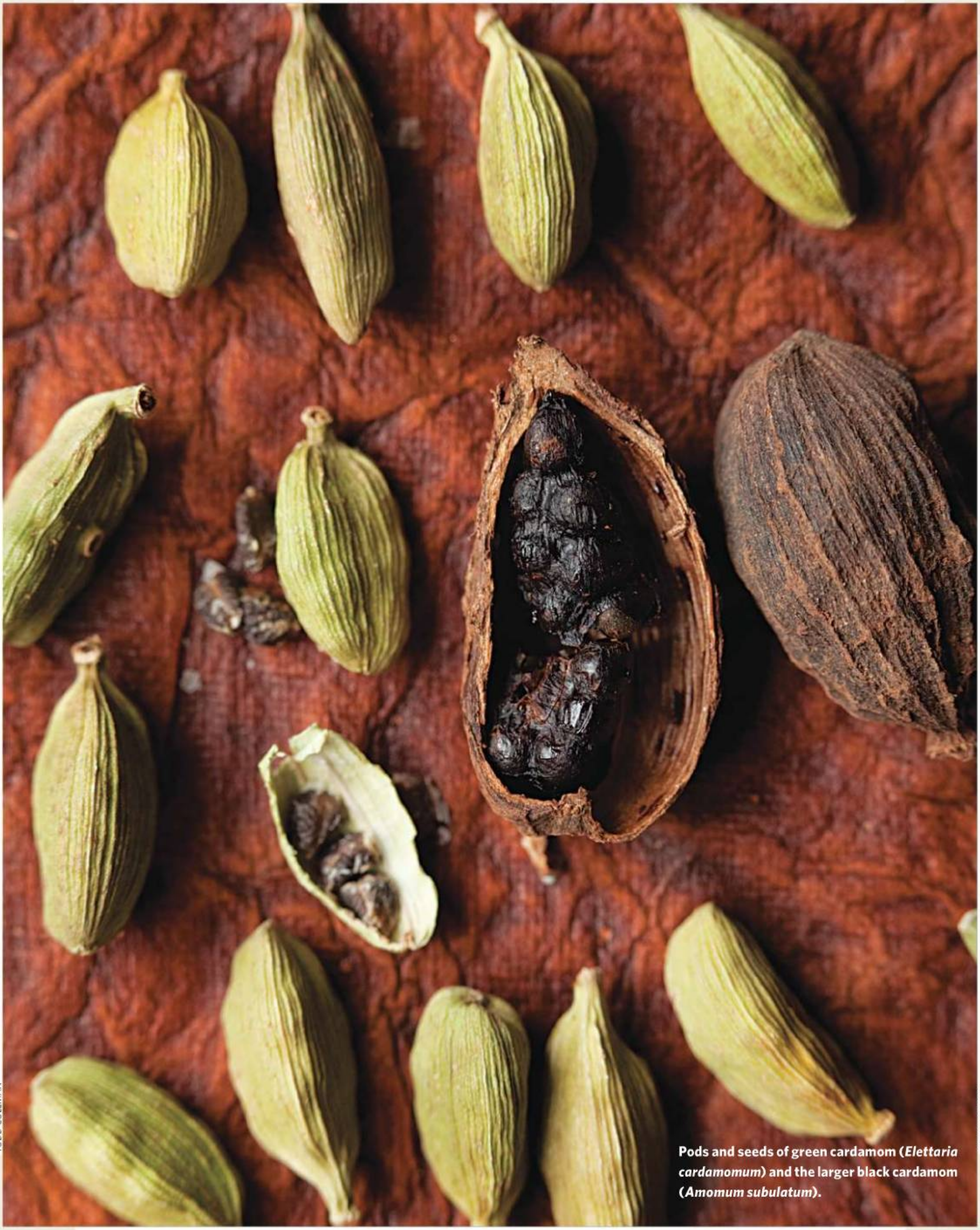

Pods and seeds of green cardamom (*Elettaria cardamomum*) and the larger black cardamom (*Amomum subulatum*).

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TODD COLEMAN (2)

Pakistani lamb *biryani*, above. Facing page, spiced tea. (See page 66 for recipes.)

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TODD COLEMAN (7)

Clockwise from top left: cardamom cream puffs; cardamom-ginger crunch; cardamom chicken curry; braided cardamom bread. (See pages 66–67 for recipes.)

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(continued from page 60) loved nothing better than sipping it along with a square of cardamom-spiced baklava. It was Arab traders who first carried cardamom from India to Babylon, Egypt, Greece, and Rome, and today the Arab countries still consume more of it than any other place on earth. It's still a precious commodity, too—nearly as costly as saffron and vanilla because, like them, it must be harvested by hand—and when I was a teenager, in our house as well as at our neighbors', serving cardamom to guests was understood as a gesture of respect.

YOU START WITH AN IDEA.

Often, that would mean producing an extravagantly spiced *biryani* made with nutty-tasting basmati rice, quite possibly the best vehicle for cardamom ever discovered. Sometimes, after a big meal, we'd follow my grandmother's custom and pass around cardamom pods to chew. In the ayurvedic system, cardamom is as much medicine as it is food; the same aromatic compounds that give the spice its flavor and warming properties also aid digestion.

As I began to spend more time in the kitchen, I learned that there is more than one type of cardamom and that each brings its own qualities to a dish. Green cardamom (*Elettaria cardamomum*), the most highly prized kind, is a bushy herb of the ginger family native to southwest India. It's cultivated extensively there and in Guatemala, now the world's largest exporter; Costa Rica, Tanzania, and Sri Lanka are the other top producers. The plants grow in clusters of slender stalks about 10 feet tall with large, lance-shaped leaves. The spice pods, which grow on shoots at the plant's base, are picked when they are just ripening and then dried under the sun or in a kiln. These small, oval pods and the tiny black seeds within contain the various compounds we experience as sweet, floral, and eucalyptus-like. That unique balance works as well in savory dishes as it does in sweet ones.

Black cardamom (*Amomum subulatum*), a spice native to the Himalayas and cultivated today in Nepal, India, China, and Bhutan, has larger, deeply ridged pods that are dried over wood fires. As a result, the pods take on a dark brown color and a bold, smoky flavor that would overwhelm a sweet cake or pudding, but in a spice rub for roasted meat or in a full-flavored stew it imparts a smoldering depth no other spice can. Used together in a single dish, such as

AND IN THE BEGINNING IT BOUNCES

my family's chicken curry, green and black cardamom can harmonize beautifully. I've learned, too, about similarly fragrant relatives of cardamom, including delicate, floral Thai cardamom (see "Expressions of Cardamom," below) and peppery West African grains of paradise.

Since I moved to the United States 19 years ago, cardamom has been both a link to home and a bridge to other cuisines. The Scandinavians, it turns out, are second only to the Arabs in their hunger for cardamom, which the Vikings discovered in Constantinople a thousand years ago. Nordic cooks grasped early on that the fat-soluble spice blooms when baked in butter-laden sweets and breads. It's the keynote in the luscious Swedish cream puffs known as *semlor* and in Finland's yeast-risen, braided *pulla* bread, among many other baked treats.

In the cooking classes I teach, I advise students to buy pods of green cardamom with a vibrant color and a strong fragrance; ones that are dull looking and shriveled will almost certainly have lost their flavor. The product labeled "white cardamom" is really just green cardamom that's been bleached for purely aesthetic reasons, and—to judge from the kinds I've tried—robbed of most of its taste and aroma. And since the flavor evaporates very quickly from the seeds once they're removed from the pod, and especially once they've been ground, it's best to buy the spice whole. If you want to cook with just the seeds—I like to fry them in oil to create a flavor base for all kinds of dishes—just use your fingers to pop open the pods and remove the seeds; keep the empty pods for steeping in coffee or tea. When I'm making desserts, I'll grind the seeds to a powder using a mortar and pestle or an electric spice grinder. As for black cardamom, it's almost always used whole and then discarded after cooking. I've never seen it for sale already ground.

I'm happy to say that my children have loved cardamom from the start. When I make the cardamom-spiced rice pudding called *kheer*, I tell them the story of how, once upon a time, I was a young engineering student who had just moved to the States. Everything was unfamiliar; nothing seemed to taste quite right. Finally, I borrowed ingredients from my neighbors and set about making my mother's *kheer*. When the milk, sugar, and rice began to simmer, I broke

AROUND A BIT

open a few pods of cardamom and dropped them into the pan; soon the kitchen began to radiate the spice's familiar scent. As I leaned over the stove to taste the *kheer*, the doorbell rang. Standing outside was a handsome young man who said he lived in the building next door. He was an MBA student from Mumbai; on his way to the library, he'd caught the scent of cardamom and, himself a little homesick, couldn't resist following it to its source. At this point my kids usually chime in. "That's when you met Daddy!" they cry, and my husband grins. Then we eat the *kheer* together, and the cardamom tastes just strong enough.

MONICA BHIDE *is the author of* Modern Spice *(Simon & Schuster, 2009) and writes the iSpice column for the* Washington Post.

EXPRESSIONS OF CARDAMOM

Green and black cardamom pods (pictured on page 61) are widely available in the U.S., but cardamom comes in other forms and varieties, too, with distinct characteristics and uses. The spice **known as Thai cardamom** (*Amomum krevanh*; pictured at left), a cousin of green and black cardamom, is harvested throughout Southeast Asia. Known as *luk krawan* in Thailand, the chickpea-size pods exude a floral, menthol-like aroma. Simmered whole with coconut milk, peanuts, bay leaves, potatoes, and other spices, they are a key flavoring in the southern Thai *massaman* curry; Thai cardamom is also used to flavor the broth in many versions of *pho*, the Vietnamese beef noodle soup, among other Southeast Asian dishes. **Cardamom extract** (pictured at right) is employed by some cooks as a shortcut for lending a dish a pronounced cardamom flavor, or for fine-textured preparations such as icing, whipped cream, and custard that would be coarsened by crushed pods or ground seeds. Cardamom extract can also be used much like vanilla extract, in baked goods and ice creams. The **leaves** of the green cardamom plant (pictured at right), roughly eight inches long, have all sorts of culinary uses. Some cooks mince them and add them to curry pastes; others use them like bay leaves, adding them whole to stews and braising liquids to add subtle zest and sweetness. You can also wrap fish or meat in cardamom leaves before grilling or roasting. The leaves will not only provide protection from the heat of the oven or grill and help to seal in moisture; they'll also impart a subtle cardamom fragrance to whatever you're cooking. (See THE PANTRY, page 96, for sources.) —*Ben Mims*

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CARDAMOM CHICKEN CURRY

SERVES 4

Author Monica Bhide uses both green and black cardamom to flavor this curry (pictured on page 64). See page 96 for sources for hard-to-find ingredients.

- 1½ cups plain yogurt, plus more for garnish
- 1½ tsp. Kashmiri chile powder
- 1 tsp. ground turmeric
- 1 tsp. kosher salt, plus more to taste
- 12 pods green cardamom, crushed
- 2 lbs. skinless bone-in chicken thighs and legs
- ¼ cup canola oil
- 8 whole black peppercorns
- 3 pods black cardamom
- 1 2" stick cinnamon
- 2 small yellow onions, minced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 serrano chiles, stemmed, seeded, and minced

BECAUSE THAT'S WHAT IDEAS DO.

- 1 1" piece ginger, peeled and minced, plus more julienned for garnish
- 3 tbsp. roughly chopped cilantro, for garnish
- 4 cups cooked rice, for serving

1 Combine yogurt, chile powder, turmeric, salt, and 8 pods green cardamom in a large bowl; add chicken, mix, and cover bowl with plastic wrap. Refrigerate for at least 30 minutes or up to overnight.

2 Heat oil in a 6-qt. pot over high heat. Add remaining green cardamom along with peppercorns, black cardamom, and cinnamon; cook until fragrant, 1–2 minutes. Add onions, garlic, chiles, and ginger; cook, stirring and adding a few tablespoons of water as needed, until onions are browned, 12–15 minutes. Add chicken and marinade; cook, flipping chicken occasionally, until most of liquid has evaporated, 20–30 minutes. Add ⅓ cup water; bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium-low; cook, stirring, until sauce has thickened, 6–8 minutes. Season with salt and garnish with ginger, cilantro, and yogurt; serve with rice.

PAKISTANI LAMB BIRYANI

SERVES 6

This recipe (pictured on page 62) comes from SAVEUR kitchen assistant Ambreen Hasan, a native of Karachi, Pakistan. See page 96 for sources for hard-to-find ingredients.

- 1 cup canola oil
- 3 large yellow onions, thinly sliced
- 2 tbsp. garam masala
- 1 tsp. crushed red chile flakes
- ½ tsp. turmeric
- 18 black peppercorns
- 9 pods green cardamom
- 3 pods black cardamom
- 2 2" cinnamon sticks
- 6 cloves garlic, minced
- 6 tomatoes, cored and minced
- 5 serrano chiles, stemmed and minced
- 1 1½" piece ginger, peeled and minced
- 2 lbs. trimmed lamb shoulder, cut into 2–3" pieces
- Kosher salt, to taste
- ½ cup plain yogurt
- ¾ cup roughly chopped mint leaves
- ¼ cup roughly chopped cilantro
- 40 threads saffron, crushed (heaping ½ tsp.)
- 2½ cups white basmati rice, soaked in cold water for 30 minutes, drained
- ½ tsp. cumin seeds
- 4 whole cloves
- 2 dried bay leaves
- Rose water or kewra essence (optional)
- Red/orange food color (optional)

1 Heat ¼ cup oil in a 5-qt. skillet over high heat. Add

OF COURSE, MOST IDEAS HEAD STRAIGHT TO THE MIDDLE WHERE IT'S SAFE AND COMFORTABLE.

onions; cook, stirring occasionally, until dark brown, 20–25 minutes. Transfer to a bowl; set aside.

2 Heat remaining oil in a 5-qt. pot over high heat. Add garam masala, chile flakes, turmeric, 10 peppercorns, 5 green cardamom pods, 2 black cardamom pods, and 1 cinnamon stick; cook, stirring, until fragrant, about 1 minute. Add garlic, tomatoes, chiles, and ginger; cook, stirring, 2–3 minutes. Add lamb, season with salt, and cook until lightly browned, about 5 minutes. Cover, reduce heat to medium; cook until lamb is tender, about 1 hour. Add fried onions, yogurt, ½ cup mint, and 2 tbsp. cilantro; cook, uncovered, for 15 minutes more. Set aside.

3 Put saffron into a bowl and cover with ½ cup hot water; set aside. Bring 4 cups of water to a boil in a 5-qt. saucepan. Add remaining peppercorns, green and black cardamom, and cinnamon, along with the rice, cumin, cloves, and bay leaves, and season with salt. Cook rice until al dente, 5–10 minutes; drain rice and set aside.

4 Transfer half the lamb curry to a 5-qt. pot. Top lamb with half the rice. Pour half the saffron mixture onto rice along with a few drops of rose water and food coloring (if using); mix into rice with your fingers. Top with remaining lamb curry and remaining rice; drizzle with remaining saffron; mix. Steam, covered, on low heat until rice is tender, about 10 minutes. Garnish with remaining mint and cilantro.

MASALA CHAI

(Spiced Tea)

MAKES 4½ CUPS

Cardamom gives this Indian tea (pictured on page 63) a bright, piney sweetness.

- ½ cup evaporated milk
- 5 tsp. sugar
- 6 black tea bags
- 5 pods green cardamom, crushed

Bring milk, sugar, tea, cardamom, and 4 cups water to a boil in a 2-qt. saucepan. Remove from heat; let steep for 5 minutes. Strain and serve hot.

SEMLOR

(Cardamom Cream Puffs)

MAKES 16 BUNS

These cream-filled, cardamom-scented pastries (pictured on page 64) are traditionally served in Sweden on the day before the beginning of Lent.

FOR THE FILLING:

- ¾ cup sugar
- 3 tbsp. cornstarch
- 1 tbsp. ground cardamom
- ¾ tsp. kosher salt
- 1½ cups milk
- 3 eggs
- 6 tbsp. unsalted butter, cut into ½" cubes
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 1½ tsp. vanilla extract

FOR THE DOUGH:

- 1 cup milk, heated to 115°
- ½ cup sugar
- 2 tsp. ground cardamom
- 2 ¼-oz. packages active dry yeast
- 1 egg
- 4 cups flour
- 1 tbsp. baking powder
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- 6 tbsp. unsalted butter, cut into ½" cubes, softened
- 1 tbsp. heavy cream
- 1 egg yolk
- Confectioners' sugar, for dusting

1 Make the filling: Whisk together sugar, cornstarch, cardamom, and salt in a 2-qt. saucepan; whisk in milk and eggs. Bring to a boil over medium heat; cook, whisking constantly, until thickened, about 1 minute. Remove from heat; whisk in butter. Transfer mixture to a bowl; press a piece of plastic wrap onto surface of filling. Refrigerate.

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❷ In a bowl, whisk cream and vanilla to stiff peaks. Fold whipped cream into chilled filling; transfer to a piping bag fitted with a fluted tip. Chill for 2 hours.

❸ Make the dough: In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with a paddle, combine milk, sugar, cardamom, and yeast; stir together and let sit until foamy, about 10 minutes. Add egg; mix to combine. Add flour, baking powder, and salt; mix until a dough forms. Replace paddle with hook attachment; knead on medium speed for 2 minutes. While kneading, slowly add butter in batches, mixing until completely incorporated before adding the next batch, 3–4 minutes. Continue kneading for 4 minutes more after last of butter is added. Transfer dough to a lightly greased bowl and cover with plastic wrap; let sit until doubled in size, about 1 hour.

❹ Heat oven to 400°. Transfer dough to a work surface and divide into 16 equal portions. Roll each portion into a ball and place 8 balls each on 2 parchment paper-lined baking sheets; cover both baking sheets with plastic wrap and let sit until dough has risen slightly, 30 minutes. In a small bowl, stir together cream and egg yolk. Uncover dough balls. Using a pastry brush, brush each dough ball with egg wash. Bake, moving baking sheets from front to back of oven and from top rack to bottom rack halfway through cooking, until golden brown, 20 minutes. Transfer to a wire rack and let cool to room temperature.

❺ Using a knife, cut ½" from the top of each bun and set aside. Pull out most of dough from inside of each bun; discard. Pipe filling into each cavity; top with reserved lids. Dust with confectioners' sugar.

PULLA

(Braided Cardamom Bread)

MAKES 2 LOAVES

See below for instructions on braiding this cardamom-spiced bread (pictured on page 64), which is eaten with coffee or tea in Finland.

- **1⅓ cups milk, heated to 115°**
- **⅔ cup sugar**
- **4 tsp. ground cardamom**
- **2 ¼-oz. packages active dry yeast**
- **3 eggs, lightly beaten**
- **6½ cups flour**
- **1 tsp. kosher salt**
- **5 tbsp. unsalted butter, cut into ½" cubes, at room temperature**
- **1 tbsp. heavy cream**
- **1 egg yolk**
- **Crushed lump sugar, for garnish (optional)**
- **Sliced almonds, for garnish (optional)**

❶ In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with a paddle, combine milk, sugar, 3 tsp. cardamom, and yeast; stir together and let sit until foamy, 10 minutes. Add eggs; mix to combine. Add flour and salt; mix until a dough forms. Replace paddle with hook attachment; knead dough on medium speed for 2 minutes. While kneading, slowly add butter in batches, mixing until incorporated before adding next batch, 3–4 minutes; continue kneading for 4 minutes more after last of butter is added. Transfer dough to a greased bowl and cover with plastic wrap; let sit until doubled in size, about 1 hour. Punch down dough; cover again with plastic wrap and let sit until fully risen, 30 minutes.

❷ Heat oven to 375°. Transfer dough to a work surface and divide into 2 equal pieces. Set 1 piece aside and divide other piece into 3 equal portions. Roll each portion between your palms and work surface to create a 16" rope. Braid ropes together to form a loaf, following the instructions below. Transfer loaf to a parchment paper-lined baking sheet. Repeat with second dough piece. Cover loaves with plastic wrap and let sit until slightly puffed up, about 20 minutes.

❸ Whisk together remaining cardamom, cream, and egg yolk in a small bowl; brush over loaves. Sprinkle with sugar and almonds (if using); bake, one loaf at a time, until golden brown, 20–25 minutes. Transfer to a rack; let cool 10 minutes before serving.

CARDAMOM-GINGER CRUNCH

MAKES 48 PIECES

SAVEUR kitchen assistant Victoria Ross makes these glazed shortbreads (pictured on page 64), which get their spicy kick from ground cardamom and ginger, for afternoon tea in her native New Zealand.

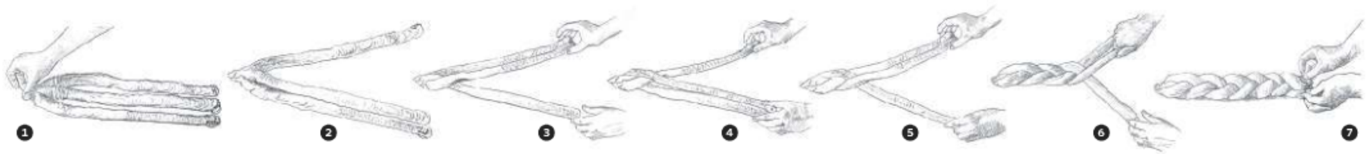
- **2 cups unsalted butter, softened, plus more for greasing**
- **1 cup sugar**
- **3 cups flour, sifted**
- **11 tsp. ground ginger**
- **3½ tsp. ground cardamom**
- **2 tsp. baking powder**
- **2 tsp. kosher salt**
- **1½ cups confectioners' sugar**
- **3 tbsp. golden syrup or dark corn syrup**

❶ Heat oven to 375°. Grease a 9" x 13" baking dish; set aside. Put 18 tbsp. butter and sugar in a large bowl; beat with a handheld mixer on medium until fluffy. Add flour, 3 tsp. ginger, 1 tsp. ground cardamom, baking powder, and 1 tsp. salt; mix until incorporated but still crumbly. Transfer mixture to reserved dish; press flat with your hands. Bake until shortbread is golden brown, about 20 minutes. Let cool.

❷ In a 1-qt. saucepan over medium heat, combine remaining butter, ginger, cardamom, and salt and the confectioners' sugar and syrup. Bring to a boil and pour over shortbread; cool. Cut into 2" rectangles.

BUT IF AN IDEA CAN STAY TRUE WHEN CHALLENGED, ESCAPE COMMITTEES AND NAYSAYERS, IT CAN ACTUALLY BECOME SOMETHING

HOW TO BRAID *PULLA*



Here's how to braid the elegant, cardamom-scented *pulla* bread described in the recipe above. ❶ Arrange the three ropes of dough side by side, perpendicular to you, and pinch the ends farthest from you together. ❷ Slide the left-hand rope and middle rope away from the right-hand rope at a 45-degree angle. ❸ Pick up the left-most rope and cross it over the middle rope, laying it down next to the right-hand rope. ❹ Pick up the right-hand rope, cross it over what is now the middle rope, and lay it down next to the inside of what is now the left-hand rope. ❺ Repeat with the new outside left-hand rope, taking the outside rope of each new parallel pair and crossing it over the new middle rope to create a braid. ❻ Continue braiding in this fashion, making sure to keep even tension in the dough throughout the process to avoid creating sections that are either too tight or too loose, as these may misshape the loaf. ❼ Once you reach the end of the braid, pinch together the loose ends and fold them under the loaf; pinch and fold the other end in the same fashion. —*Ben Mims*

ILLUSTRATIONS: BRENDA WEAVER

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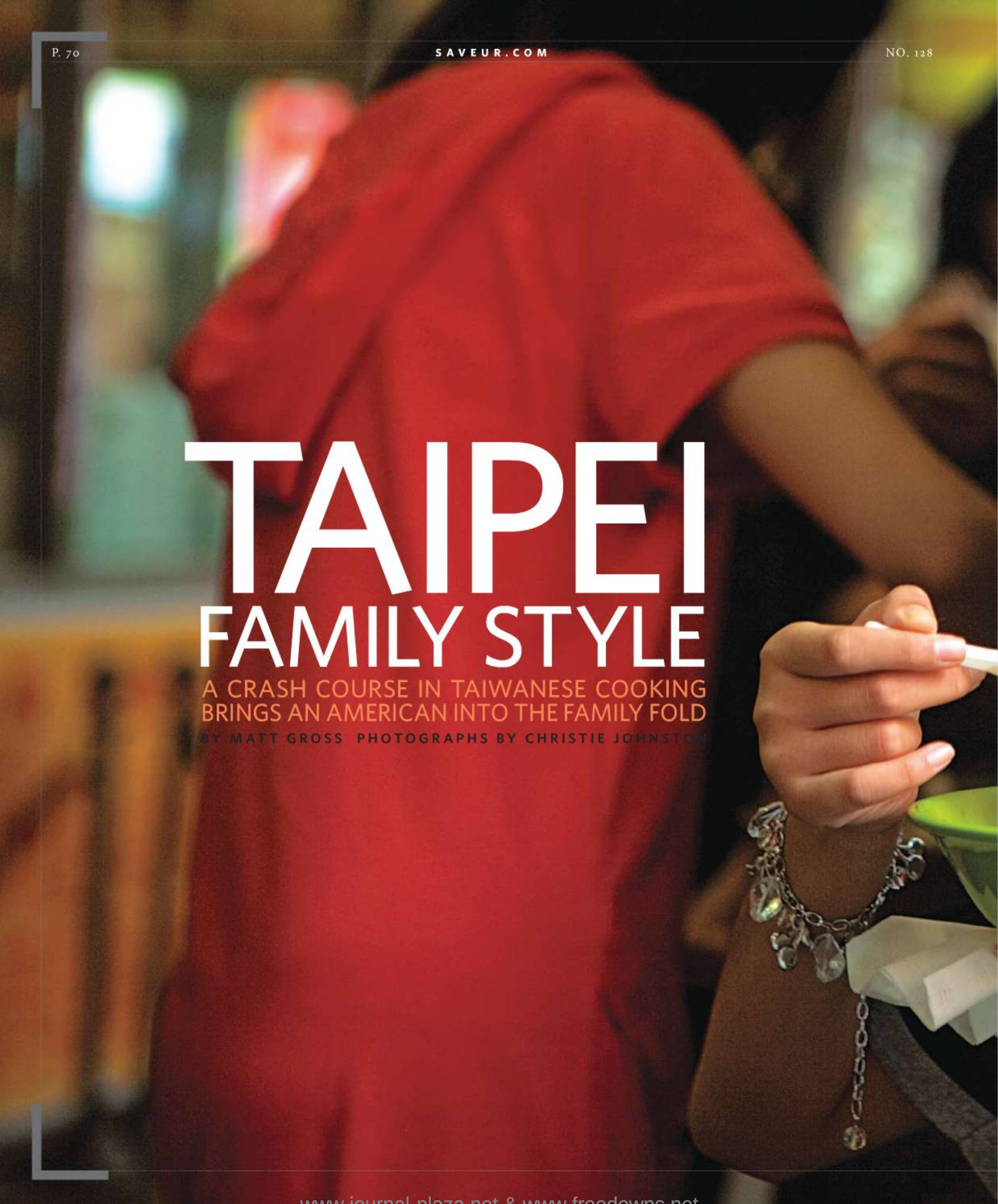

TAIPEI FAMILY STYLE

A CRASH COURSE IN TAIWANESE COOKING BRINGS AN AMERICAN INTO THE FAMILY FOLD

BY MATT GROSS PHOTOGRAPHS BY CHRISTIE JOHNSTON

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The kitchen is old. It's all tiles. Blue, white, and gray ones on the floor, yellowish ones on the walls, and rust-colored ones on the countertops. There is a beige refrigerator next to a single-burner stove attached to a gas line. Sitting on top is the kitchen's only pan, a recently purchased enameled wok that has already lost its sheen. This cramped, 50-square-foot nook, on the third floor of my in-laws' home in downtown Taipei, is the domain of a woman named A-Mui Huang. It is hardly a showpiece. It's simply a place to cook lunch and dinner, sometimes breakfast, for a family that has grown and contracted and is now just starting to grow again. Like A-Mui herself—the Liu family's live-in cook since the early 1970s—it is efficient, practical, and, despite its age, a reliable source of joy.

None of which, alas, could really be said about me—especially when I'm making dumplings at the table in the hallway outside the kitchen. Even though A-Mui has shown me how to put a dollop of seasoned pork onto a round flour wrapper and crinkle it together with one hand, I just can't get it right. My folds are off. Filling spills out. Eventually, though, I fall into a rhythm, and once I've accumulated about 50 mostly misshapen dumplings, A-Mui and my mother-in-law, a petite, elegant woman named Mei-Mei Chen, pluck out a single one and discuss it between themselves at length. Finally, my mother-in-law declares, in careful English, "A-Mui says this one is perfect."

It's a minor success, and in this household I'll take what I can get. It's been more than ten years since I met Jean Liu, the only daughter of Mei-Mei and her husband, Kan-Nan Liu, but I've never quite found my place in her family. At first, the reasons seemed obvious. I'm not Taiwanese, and I speak only a little Mandarin, the official language of Taiwan, and hardly a word of Taiwanese (the dialect of the descendants of the Chinese who arrived on this island 400 years ago). Also, I am not a doctor. Jean's mother is a general practitioner, and her father is a brain surgeon. A brain surgeon! I'm a writer, which in the Liu family cosmology ranks well below doctor, computer-chip designer (Jean's brother's job), and even artist—but above day laborer.

There has, however, always been one tiny, tenuous point of connection between Jean's parents and me: food. Or, more specifically, my fascination with Taiwanese food, which, I learned over time, is heavily influenced by Japan (the island was a Japanese colony from 1895 to 1945) and incorporates regional flavors from all over mainland China, thanks to the influx of immigrants after 1949, when Chiang Kai-shek and his Nationalists, having lost the Chinese civil war to the Communists, retreated to Taiwan, bringing millions of refugees. Despite its many influences, the cooking on this small island (about the size of Maryland) maintains a stark individuality. It is defined by its ingredients—herbs like basil, offal such as intestine, lots of seafood—and also by its structure. Big, heavy dishes are rare, and *xiao chi*, or small eats, are the norm, found everywhere from night markets and street corners to full-scale restaurants and homes. It's all about snacking.

On annual visits from our home in New York City, Jean and I would sit at the table with her mother and father on the far more modern second floor of their long, narrow apartment, eating watermelon and crunchy green guavas and discussing where to get the best *niu rou mian*, spicy beef noodle soup garnished with pickled mustard greens, or *mian xian*, a gelatinous wheat noodle soup. At mealtime, there were only three subjects of conversation: what we'd just eaten, what we were eating now, and what we'd eat later.

I reserved my greatest enthusiasm for A-Mui's simple, satisfying home cooking. And in A-Mui herself, I saw an opportunity. Roughly pear-shaped, with twinkly eyes and a crackly, joke-making voice, she was (like me) an outsider who (unlike me) had become part of the family. Perhaps, I thought, if I could learn to cook as she did, I could prove my merit to Jean's family. I even mentioned the idea to A-Mui on my first visit; it was politely smiled at and forgotten.

Eight years later, Jean and I are married and her parents have resigned themselves to my presence, perhaps because Jean is pregnant with our first child. A-Mui, meanwhile, is nearing 70 and considering retirement. Now is the time, I realize, to make good on that old vow; when A-Mui leaves, her knowledge will leave with her, and the recipes that sustained my wife and her family for all those years will be *(continued on page 76)*

Matt Gross *writes the Frugal Traveler column for the* New York Times. *His most recent article for* SAVEUR *was "On the Road, Unplugged" (June/July 2008).*

Facing page, steamed fish with ginger, scallions, and fermented black beans (see page 81 for a recipe). Previous pages, a girl enjoys a bowl of noodles in broth at Ay-Chung, a restaurant in Taipei.

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A family meal of garlic chives with pork, sesame oil chicken with noodles, pan-fried pork cutlets coated in sour *hong zao* paste (see pages 81 and 82 for recipes), stewed pigs' feet, and winter melon soup, at the home of Mei-Mei Chen and Kan-Nan Liu, pictured sitting together at top left.

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(continued from page 72) mere memories. So, with my wife's blessing, I've flown to Taipei by myself for a week to learn A-Mui's secrets—to preserve her recipes and thereby make myself an integral, indispensable member of the Liu family.

THE BUILDING THAT HOUSES THE LIUS' multistory apartment has a wonderfully faded grandeur, the Ionic columns on its façade wrapping elegantly around a street corner in the Ximending (West Gate) neighborhood. It was once the Capitol Hotel, and then the Capitol Hospital, and now it's been divided into various businesses, including a clinic, which Mei-Mei runs, and the Liu family's apartment. This is typical of Taipei, a city of 2.6 million that has, in the span of 60 years, speedily but haphazardly transformed itself into a hypermodern metropolis, with citywide wi-fi and the world's second-tallest skyscraper. Still, lots of the old bones remain. It's progress, tempered by practicality.

The first morning of my visit, I am on the street outside the building at 6:00 A.M., bleary from jet lag, to join A-Mui on a trip to the market. Following her through the streets at this early hour, I can barely recognize the neighborhood. At night, Ximending is a frenetic place. If you're a Taipei teenager, it's where you go to shop for trendy Japanese clothes, watch movies, and eat in goofy theme restaurants. It's noisy and neon and innocently joyful. But this early in the morning, Ximending is still and silent. In the postdawn light, other facets of the neighborhood stand out: a municipal recreation center with a Japanese café on the ground floor; an all-night noodle shop that's closing up; the elementary school that Jean, her mother, and her grandmother all attended. And the market.

AT MEALTIME, THERE WERE THREE TOPICS OF CONVERSATION: WHAT WE'D JUST EATEN, WHAT WE WERE EATING NOW, AND WHAT WE'D EAT LATER

Some Asian markets have a romance about them—a festive, rainbow spirit. Not the one in Ximending. It's in the basement of an unassuming apartment building, and the stairway entrance looks like a portal to Hell. Crimson meats, bulbous organs, and whole pigs' faces hang from hooks; monstrous slabs of deep-sea squid are rehydrating in plastic tubs; a man is using a blowtorch to singe the hair off pork trotters. The floor glistens, and the yellow incandescent lights glow like the Devil's eyeballs. My mother-in-law didn't want me to come here: Wouldn't I prefer the pretty fruit market instead?

I trail A-Mui as she browses the inventory: fish dragged hours before from the South China Sea, black-foot chickens, pungent greens trimmed from mountain slopes, more kinds of bamboo shoots than I knew existed. By the time we're back home, I'm beat. I lie down for a quick nap, and when I wake up, around 10:00 A.M, A-Mui has already cleaned and chopped everything and is starting to prepare lunch.

Working with that single wok, A-Mui methodically adds ingredients—slices of ginger to fry in oil, then chunks of kabocha squash, then water—and in minutes, when the squash has softened, has a completed dish. And then another: scallions and fat shrimp, stir-fried with a splash of rice wine and finished in a flash. Next is *kong xin cai*, or water spinach—boom, done. Fried spareribs and cubed daikon in broth: ta-da!

And that's just the first meal. Over the course of the week we repeat the morning's schedule again and again, using different ingredients and different dishes, with A-Mui doing her best to explain her methods in Taiwanese, which I don't understand, and me asking questions in bad Mandarin, which she doesn't understand. The dishes are outwardly simple, and so is the repertoire of cooking sauces at her disposal (dark soy, sweet soy, rice wine), but soon I pick up on some subtle techniques. To almost every dish, I notice, she adds a spoonful of tiny beige pellets—powdered mushroom broth—which adds umami depth without the ill effects of MSG. She shows me how to use the little dried fish I've seen in market stalls for years, stir-frying them with chiles and peanuts, or adding them to *shan shu*, a wild leafy green. A-Mui is also a master of deep-frying. She uses sweet potato flour to give a light, crunchy crust to everything from chicken wings to pork cutlets marinated in sour *hong zao*, a pink paste made from fermented rice. And she fries foods at two temperatures, first over a medium-high flame, to cook it through, and then cranked up high, to fry the exterior to a crackling brown.

What never ceases to amaze me as I watch her is how she blazes through the cooking. No matter what she's making—long beans with ground pork, an eggy custard studded with shrimp and mushrooms—lunch is ready in 20 minutes, and either she or her husband, A-Hang (who does odd jobs for the family and is as skinny and shy as A-Mui is big and friendly), will carry the tray of dishes downstairs to the big, round dinner table on the second floor.

The more time I spend with A-Mui, the more I want to know about her, about where she came from, where she learned to cook, but the language barrier keeps me from asking. So, one day over lunch, I ask my mother-in-law about her. In central Taiwan around the middle of the last century, Mei-Mei explains, girls were often "adopted" into the families of the men they were to marry. This was the case with young A-Mui, and she lived with A-Hang's family for years. But A-Mui wasn't happy, so she ran away to Taipei and cooked for a few different families, eventually winding up with the Lius. The employment *(continued on page 81)*

ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI

Facing page, garlic chives sautéed with pork and fermented black beans and garnished with Thai chiles (see recipe, page 81).

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Taipei's Street Food Banquet

In Taipei, food is everywhere, from the popular markets around town that operate as open-air food courts to individual stands set up on nearly every corner. I once walked through a fabric market and found that every third or fourth stall was selling not bolts of silk and cotton but noodles, dried plums, or pork buns 14. Many of the best eats in Taipei are sold from pushcarts that take up regular positions on busy sidewalks—in the trendy Ximending neighborhood, for instance, you can find candied strawberries and cherry tomatoes on sticks, or pork dumplings pan-fried on the spot—while casual, open-fronted restaurants erase the boundary between inside and outside and cook up quick favorites like briny oyster omelettes. The most encyclopedic array of street foods, however, can be found at the city's 25 or so night markets. These spots are as much places for socializing as they are places for eating. As such, they can get awfully crowded. Shilin 6, the biggest and most famous one, located in the northern part of the city, has been moved indoors and is therefore now slightly more navigable; more typical is the Raohe Street night market 12 15, a single, densely packed lane in the Song Shan district with an ornate Buddhist temple at one end.

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Whichever market you go to, first make a slow circuit of the entire place to scope out the options. The most popular offerings are what I call "stuff on sticks"—skewered fish balls, sliced meat, squid rings, and vegetables, all ready to be grilled or cooked in boiling broth 5. Other popular night market foods are hot pots 1 (essentially the same thing without the sticks); *mian xian*, thin wheat noodles in a gelatinous broth; seafood dishes like cuttlefish soup 7; and *lu rou fan*, a stewed pork dish served over rice 13 (see page 82 for a recipe). Braised pig parts (nose, tail, and everything in between) 9 command a loyal following too, as do medicinal soups made from ingredients like ginseng and wolfberries 8. Also popular is stinky tofu, well-brined cubes of bean curd that are fried until pungent and then served on skewers 11 with a spicy-sweet sauce, or cooked in a hot pot with intestines 10 in a dish known as "stinky stinky pot." Ears of steamed 3 or grilled corn 4, as well as dumplings, like *sheng jian bao* (pan-fried pork buns), can be found all over the city. If you're out late enough at a night market, you might as well stick around for breakfast; a good choice is Yonghe Soy Milk King 2, which serves a comforting meal of hot soy milk and *you tiao*, a kind of airy fried cruller, no matter the hour. —*M.G.*

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The author with his in-laws, Kan-Nan Liu and Mei-Mei Chen.

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(continued from page 76) gave her economic freedom (she not only put her kids through university but invested in land, too) and, I imagine, helped her reconcile herself to marriage with A-Hang.

MOST NIGHTS DURING MY VISIT, I try to get out of the house for dinner—after a full day with A-Mui and my in-laws, I've had all the family and all the cooking I can take. Many evenings I meet up with Jean's cousin Vince. About my age and very tall, he's a dentist who speaks excellent English, longs to continue his dental studies in America, and loves to eat. On our first night out, he treats me to a classic snack pairing—*rou gen*, a thick soup with bits of pork, and *lu rou fan*, luscious stewed pork over rice—at a bustling, open-air stand that, as many Taipei places do, blurs the distinction between restaurant dining and street food (see "Taipei's Street Food Banquet," page 78).

The next night, we head straight for Yong Kang Street, in a working-class neighborhood that has some of the best restaurants in the city. Here we consider stopping at James Kitchen, a Taiwanese-style *izakaya*, or pub, that grills mackerel as perfectly as any place in Tokyo and serves it alongside stewed pig intestine. But we bypass it for the famous soup at Yong-Kang Beef Noodle, whose namesake dish is spicy and sweet with tender braised beef and pickled mustard greens. Then we go around the corner to Ice Monster, where we split a plate of crushed ice topped with sliced mangoes and mango ice cream.

On another outing we go to the Raohe Street night market. Night markets are a Taipei institution, bustling lanes where vendors sell cheap jewelry, clothing, and, most important, food. The market has a mind-blowing variety of dishes: skewered fish cakes and grilled cuttlefish and my favorite, *hu jiao bing*: black pepper buns. A northern Chinese import, *hu jiao bing* is wheat-flour dough stuffed with peppery pork and baked in a cylindrical clay oven that calls to mind an Indian tandoor. The line for them is long—30 minutes, at least—but Vince is patient, unfazed. Everywhere we've been, he's exuded a sweetly geeky enthusiasm not only for the food but also for my friendship. He seems inordinately pleased to be hanging out, and frankly, I'm not sure how to react. Who am I to deserve such kind attention? Then I realize that Vince is the only family member of his generation still living in Taipei: his brother is in Tokyo, his cousins in America. He's an insider looking out—me in reverse—and my presence offers him a taste of another world. And so we wait for our buns, happily.

THE NEXT DAY IS A SUNDAY, AND ABOUT a dozen aunts, uncles, and friends are coming over for lunch. Today's meal is special not only because of the company but because A-Mui is showing me how to make two dishes traditionally served to new mothers—which is what Jean will soon be. One is a creamy stew of pigs' feet that's supposed to stimulate breast milk production. The other is *ma you ji*, chicken cooked in black sesame oil and rice wine and served over thin noodles. As usual, the ingredients are minimal, the flavors boundless.

Also as usual, A-Mui is a whirlwind, getting ten dishes into and out of the wok in an hour. I help her make a whole red snapper steamed with black beans, a winter melon soup with clams, and a dish called *cang ying tou*, or fly's head, which is a fiery pile of ground pork, garlic chives, and chiles. Everyone clusters around the table, chopsticks dart in and out of the bowls, and A-Mui observes with satisfaction. Mandarin, Taiwanese, and English bounce around, and Jean's father, who's been working long hours all week, beams a proud, beatific smile at the clan.

Amid all this action, I feel a bit lost, but contentedly so. For this family—my family—eating well is the normal course of affairs, and the greatest sign of acceptance is not to be singled out for special attention but just to be offered a bowl, a pair of chopsticks, and a seat at the table.

CANG YING TOU

(Garlic Chives with Pork)

SERVES 2–4

For this quick, boldly flavored dish, known as "fly's head" (pictured on page 77), look for garlic chives whose buds are still intact. See page 96 for sources for hard-to-find ingredients.

- **1 tbsp. canola oil**
- **5 oz. garlic chives or scallions, trimmed and cut crosswise into ¼" lengths (about 1¾ cups)**
- **3 oz. ground pork**
- **2 tbsp. dried fermented black beans, soaked for 30 minutes and drained**
- **1½ tbsp. soy sauce**
- **2 Thai chiles, stemmed and thinly sliced crosswise**

Heat oil in a 10" skillet or wok over high heat until shimmering. Add garlic chives, pork, black beans, and soy sauce and cook, stirring often, until pork is cooked through and chives have wilted, 3–4 minutes. Transfer to a serving bowl and garnish with chiles.

HONG ZAO ZHA ZHU PAI

(Sour Fried Pork Cutlets)

SERVES 4

These pan-fried pork cutlets (pictured on page 82) take their pleasantly sour flavor from hong zao, a reddish fermented rice paste. See page 96 for sources for hard-to-find ingredients.

- **3 tbsp. hong zao paste**
- **1 tbsp. sugar**
- **1 tsp. mushroom powder**
- **4 4-oz. boneless pork chops, trimmed and pounded to ¼" thickness**
- **½ cup coarsly ground sweet potato starch or panko**
- **1 cup canola oil**

❶ Combine hong zao paste, sugar, and mushroom powder in a medium bowl. Put pork into a baking dish and smear with the marinade; cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least one hour and up to overnight.

❷ Put sweet potato starch on a plate and dredge pork, shaking off excess. Heat ½ cup oil in a 12" nonstick skillet or wok over medium-high heat. Add two pieces of pork to skillet and cook, turning once, until golden brown and crispy, 3–4 minutes. Transfer pork to a rack set inside a rimmed baking sheet. Wipe out skillet and repeat with remaining oil and pork. To serve, cut the pork into strips and transfer to a platter.

QING ZHENG YU

(Steamed Fish with Ginger and Scallions)

SERVES 2

You can use a bamboo steamer instead of a wok or skillet to steam the fish for this simple Taiwanese favorite (pictured on page 73). See page 96 for sources for hard-to-find ingredients.

- **1 14 oz. whole fish, such as sea bass or red snapper, cleaned**
- **1 1" piece ginger, peeled and cut into coins, plus one 3" piece, peeled and julienned**
- **2 tbsp. Chinese cooking wine, usually labeled michiu**
- **2 tbsp. light soy sauce**
- **2 tbsp. dried fermented black beans, soaked for 30 minutes and drained**
- **3 scallions, julienned**
- **¼ cup canola oil**

❶ Put fish on a 12" plate and slide half of the ginger coins underneath the fish. Put remaining ginger coins inside cavity of fish; set aside. Pour water to a depth of 1" into a 14" high-sided

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The author with his in-laws, Kan-Nan Liu and Mei-Mei Chen.

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1. Combine hong zao paste, sugar, and mushroom powder in a medium bowl. Put pork into a baking dish and smear with the marinade; cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least one hour and up to overnight.

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- **3 scallions, julienned**
- **¼ cup canola oil**

1. Put fish on a 12" plate and slide half of the ginger coins underneath the fish. Put remaining ginger coins inside cavity of fish; set aside. Pour water to a depth of 1" into a 14" high-sided

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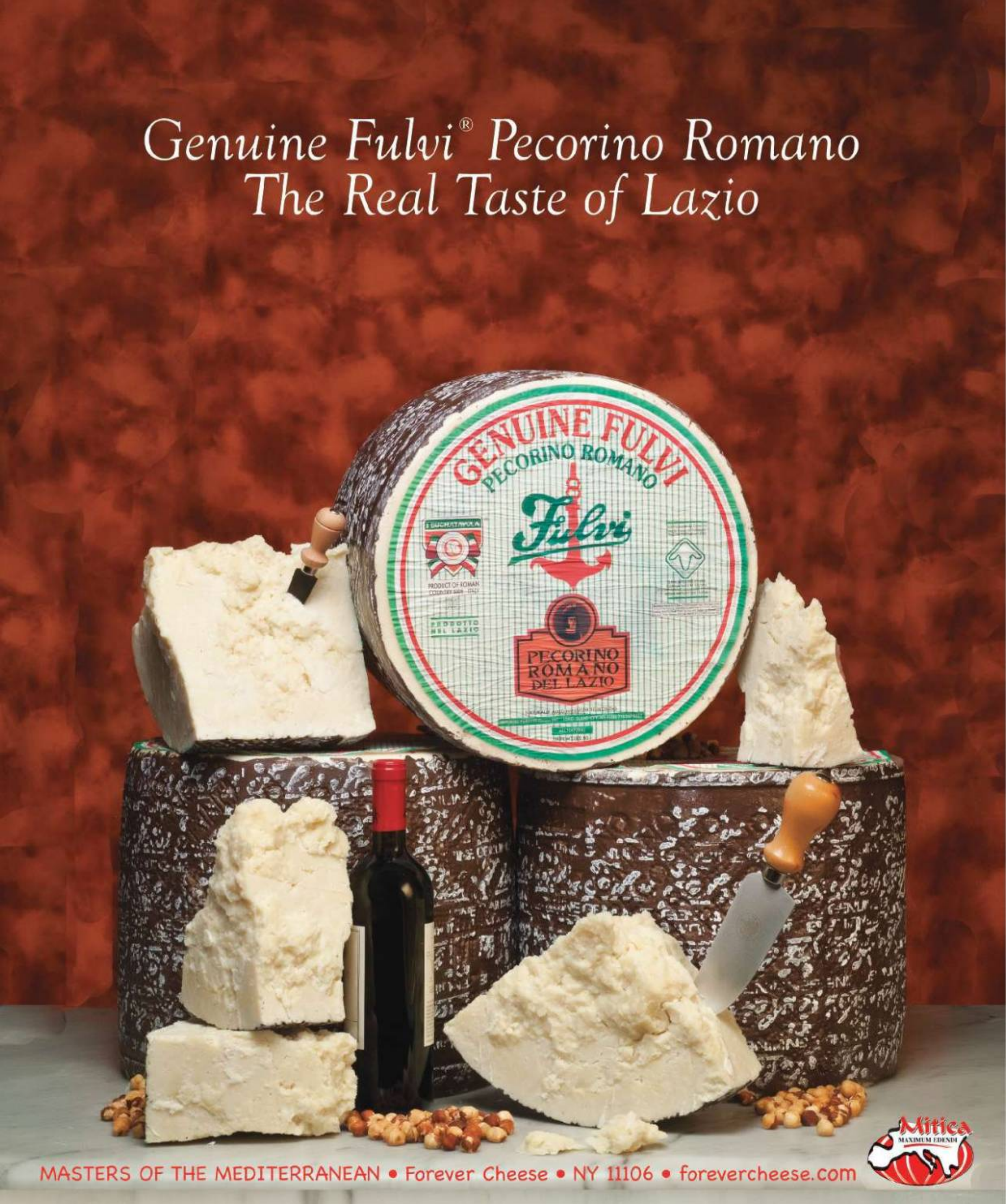

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IN THE SAVEUR

KITCHEN

Discoveries and Techniques from Our Favorite Room in the House » Edited by Todd Coleman

TODD COLEMAN

A Taipei Pantry

THE FLAVORS of Taiwan (see "Taipei, Family Style," page 70) echo those of mainland China and Japan, but the island boasts its own canon of staple ingredients. **Kabocha** ❶ and other kinds of hard squash—collectively called *nan gua* in Mandarin—are often stir-fried with ginger or stuffed with sticky rice and sweet Chinese sausage and baked. A clear, faintly sweet variety of **Chinese rice wine** ❷, sometimes labeled *michiu* or *mi jiu* and intended only for cooking, is used for braises and stews. The lees, or leftover solids, from the making of rice wine are mashed into ***hong zao*** ❸, a marinating paste that imparts a complex, sour flavor and pink hue to meats. Fermenting rice a different way produces rich, tangy **black vinegar** ❹, which goes into dishes like hot-and-sour soup and *mian xian*, a garlicky noodle soup, and makes a great dipping sauce for dumplings. Musky-tasting **white pepper** ❺ is often used in stir-fries, as are **dried fermented black beans** ❻, which lend a pungent, earthy flavor. The Taiwanese are masters of deep-frying, and their preferred batter is made with **sweet potato starch** ❼, which creates a crisp, light crust (use the coarsest variety you can find). **Mushroom powder** ❽—essentially dehydrated mushroom broth—adds a savory, umami character to many dishes. —*Matt Gross*

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TODD COLEMAN (3); FACING PAGE: TODD COLEMAN (2)

3 Pasta Tips

Some of the most famous Roman pasta dishes (see "Eternal Pleasures," page 42) contain just a handful of ingredients; the beloved *cacio e pepe*, for example, consists of nothing but pasta, cheese, oil, and black pepper (see page 55 for a recipe). What makes humble dishes like these so special is the way they are prepared: with subtle and time-honored techniques that make the whole considerably greater than the sum of the parts. —*Hunter Lewis*

❶ **Toast your black pepper:** Merely sprinkling preground pepper over the finished pasta won't come close to achieving the desired flavor in a classic *cacio e pepe* or carbonara sauce. Instead, crush whole black peppercorns in a mortar and pestle or grind them on the coarsest setting in a spice grinder. Then "toast" the cracked pepper by frying it in the olive oil you'll be using for the pasta sauce, heating it until it smells very fragrant.

❷ **Finish your pasta in the sauce:** Here's a case where undercooking is the right thing to do. Boil your pasta until it's just short of al dente, then finish cooking it in the hot pan or skillet containing your sauce, tossing the pasta and the sauce together vigorously. This technique will cause the sauce to coat the pasta more thoroughly; it's the key to dishes like *bucatini all'amatriciana* (see page 55 for a recipe).

❸ **Reserve some of your pasta water:** Adding a few ladlefuls of salty, starchy pasta water to the pasta and the sauce as you toss them together will moisten your sauce and add an additional layer of flavor and body to the final dish. In the case of the *cacio e pepe* (pictured), it will also help the cheese to melt evenly, ensuring a creamy, emulsified sauce.

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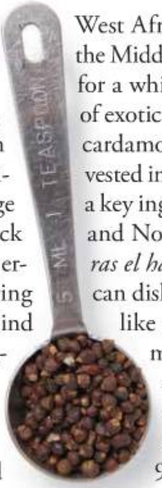
Taste of Paradise



SOME FOODS HAVE a lot to live up to. Take grains of paradise, a little-known cousin of cardamom. With a name like that, this spice had better be good. Well, as we found out while experimenting with different kinds of cardamom for the recipes that appear in "Queen of Spices" (page 60), it is. Native to West Africa, the black spice, sold as dried seeds the size of peppercorns, has an understated potency, delivering an edge-of-the-tongue heat that calls to mind black pepper. But it also has a bright eucalyptus note that hints at its shared lineage with cardamom. Belonging to the species *Aframomum melegueta*, the spice is used extensively in Ethiopia, Morocco, and West Africa. It was introduced to Europe in the Middle Ages and became fashionable there for a while, taking its place in the pantheon of exotic spices along with cinnamon, ginger, cardamom, and black pepper. Today it is harvested in Nigeria, Ghana, and Liberia, and it's a key ingredient in a number of West African and North African preparations, including *ras el hanout*, a spice blend used in Moroccan dishes. Crushed with other whole spices like coriander and a little citrus zest, it makes a delicious seasoning for grilled or roasted fish, and it tastes great in mulled wine, gingerbread, and molasses cookies. (See THE PANTRY, page 96, for a source.) —*Ben Mims*

A Plum of a Tomato Slender San Marzano tomatoes have a more pronounced flavor than romas and other popular plum varieties. They are also relatively low in acidity and thus have a mellower character that works well in sauces for Roman pasta dishes such as *bucatini all'amatriciana* (see page 55 for a recipe) and in braises like *coda alla vaccinara*, the Roman oxtail stew (page 55). What's more, San Marzanos have only two seed pockets, meaning there's more flesh and less pulp. The tomatoes' name refers both to the cultivar and to the town in Italy's Campania region where it was first grown. Some cooks insist on using only San Marzanos that bear the D.O.P. label, meaning they were raised in the volcanic soil of the officially designated San Marzano appellation in Campania. Lou Di Palo, the owner of Di Palo Selects, a New York City–based purveyor of fine Italian foods, recommends the imported Fortuna and Pastosa brands. But demand for the imported tomatoes is high, and a single 28-ounce can from the best producers may cost as much as $15. In testing the Roman recipes in this issue, we found that less-expensive domestic San Marzano–style tomatoes, especially the San Marzano brand, worked just as well as imported ones. —*Mari Uyehara*

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MINDY ROZENBERG just came back from the beautiful south of France. Staying at the InterContinental Carlton in Cannes and eating at the most sought after table in Nice—La Petite Maison—where the rich and famous hang out. She enjoyed an intimate atmosphere and a divine culinary experience.

KELLY SHEA just returned from Rosewood Little Dix Bay in the British Virgin Islands, feasting in their fine dining restaurant Sugar Mill, which features a unique pan-Asian/Caribbean fusion menu by Chef Hemant Dadlani.

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ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI

Le Creuset—
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LE CREUSET

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Bliss in a Bowl

FINISHING A PASTA dish by tossing all the ingredients together in the hot skillet or saucepan is a tried-and-true technique for intensifying flavor (see "3 Pasta Tips," page 88). In most cases, that is. For certain preparations, like *spaghetti alla carbonara* (see page 56 for a recipe), that call for raw fresh eggs or egg yolks, you want to finish mixing the ingredients in a bowl instead of a skillet. Bringing those eggs into contact with the hot cooking surface risks curdling them, marring the sauce's silky texture. The technique is simple: ❶ Base ingredients like oil and pork (in the case of carbonara, that would be *guanciale* or pancetta) should be cooked in a skillet first, to render the fat, but once you've done that, the contents of the skillet should be transferred to a big bowl and allowed to cool a bit. ❷ Then you can add the grated cheese and the eggs, which should be at room temperature. ❸ Next, use a wooden spoon to vigorously stir the ingredients together to make a thick, custardy sauce. ❹ Finally, transfer your just-cooked pasta to the bowl and toss it with the sauce, adding a little pasta water as you go, until the sauce is creamy and coats the noodles. —*H.L.*

A Stirring Revelation

Despite James Bond's preference, the best martinis are not shaken (see "Revolutionary Spirit," page 30). Shaking produces a frothy cocktail flecked with ice shards; it's the right technique for cream- or juice-based drinks like the Tante Marie Fizz (see page 33 for a recipe). But you don't want bubbles and bits of ice compromising the clear, languid character of an all-spirits cocktail like the original dry martini (see page 33 for a recipe). These you stir, with a long-handled bar spoon, for at least 20 seconds. Either stir in circles or roll the spoon's swizzled handle between your thumb and first two fingers while moving the spoon up and down in the glass. —*Betsy Andrews*

TODD COLEMAN (5)

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- **Kahlúa Risotto**, from Tsz Chan in Temple City, CA
- **Ancho Rubbed Country Fried Steaks** with Kahlúa Red Eye Pecan Gravy, from Cheryl Perry in Hertford, NC
- **Kahlúa Mocha Picante**, from Carolyn Kumpe in El Dorado, CA

Noelle Bothe from Uniontown, OH is our winner, with her recipe for **Dark Chocolate Kahlúa Fondue**. To see this recipe today, visit:

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A Frogs' Legs Primer

FROGS' LEGS APPEAR in many Chinese, Vietnamese, Italian, Cajun, and French dishes, including the Provençal-style sautéed frogs' legs described in the recipe on page 25. Usually sold frozen and already cleaned, frogs' legs can be purchased at some large supermarkets (most often in the seafood department), through online seafood retailers, and at Asian markets, which may also sell fresh legs and even whole bullfrogs that must be cleaned and skinned at home. The majority of frogs' legs sold in this country come from aquaculture farms in Asia, where the frogs are bred to yield a meat that's whiter and milder-tasting than that of wild bullfrogs—though it's not impossible to find frozen frogs' legs that have come from wild-caught frogs, whose meat has a richer, gamier taste. Producers are not required to make the distinction on their packaging labels, but a good way to determine whether the legs you've purchased came from a wild frog or a farmed one is by looking at their color: legs from farmed frogs tend to have a lighter hue. Most frozen frogs' legs sold in this country are four to five inches long and usually weigh between two and four ounces per pair, each leg being roughly the size of a small chicken wing. They should be plump and have a healthy pink color. Each pair of frogs' legs is typically connected at the top by a small bone, which can be snipped with kitchen shears. Many cooks also trim away the feet with a paring knife. If using fresh, unskinned legs, just slide off the skin as if you were taking off a glove, then soak the legs for two hours in cold water to mellow the flavor. —*Riddhi Shah*

TODD COLEMAN

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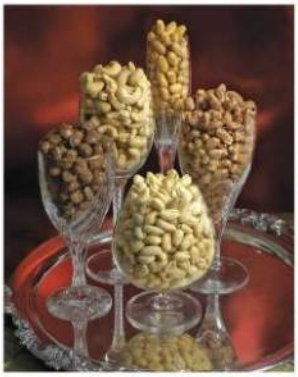

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THE PANTRY

A Guide to Resources

In producing the stories for this issue, we discovered ingredients and information too good to keep to ourselves. Please feel free to raid our pantry!

BY BEN MIMS

Fare

To learn more about the new designs of and to purchase **Tupperware** products, go to www.tupperware.com. Purchase **Joyva halvah** from Halvah.biz ($28 for a 6-pound loaf; 866/442-5824; www.halvah.biz). To make the grilled green onions with romesco (see page 18), use **ñora peppers**, available from La Tienda ($21.95 for about 16 peppers; see "Classic," below). When visiting Cape Town, head over to the Athlone suburb to eat a **Gatsby sandwich** at Super Fisheries (63 Old Klipfontein Road; 27/21/696-9833). Buy **Cruzan Single Barrel Rum** from Crown Wine & Spirits ($33 for a 750-milliliter bottle; 866/946-3830; www.crownwineandspirits.com). Buy **paskha molds** from the St. Joseph School for Boys bookstore ($23.95 each; 574/333-3420; www.easterngiftshop.com).

Ingredient

To make the sautéed frogs' legs (see page 25), purchase **frozen frogs' legs** from Linton's Seafood ($10 for 1 pound of 3–4 pairs; 877/546-8667; www.lintonseafood.com).

Kitchenwise

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Classic

Purchase ingredients and equipment needed for preparing paella, including **paella pans**, **Spanish saffron**, **Valencia** or **bomba rice** (pictured at left), and **smoked paprika** (ask for bittersweet; pictured at left), from specialty Spanish food purveyor La Tienda (800/710-4304; www.tienda.com). To make the paella with rabbit and snails (see page 40), buy **canned snails** from iGourmet.com ($25 for a 14-ounce can of 36 snails; 877/446-8763; www.igourmet.com).

Rome

To make the cheese and pepper pasta (see page 55), use **Cacio de Roma** cheese from Di Palo Selects ($16.99 per pound; 212/226-1033; www.dipaloselects.com). To make the bucatini with spicy tomato sauce (see page 55) and the *spaghetti alla carbonara* (see page 56), use **guanciale** from Salumeria Biellese ($12.75 per pound; 212/736-7376; www.salumeriabiellese.com). To make the chicory in anchovy sauce (see page 57), buy **puntarelle** from Melissa's/World Variety Produce (prices vary by availability; 800/588-0151; www.melissas.com).

Cardamom

To prepare our cardamom recipes (see pages 66–67), purchase **green cardamom pods** ($9 for a 2-ounce pack), **black cardamom pods** ($6 for a 2-ounce pack), and **ground cardamom** ($8 for a 2-ounce pack) from Kalustyan's (800/352-3451; www.kalustyans.com) and **Thai cardamom pods** from Temple of Thai ($3.89 for a 1.76-ounce bag; 877/811-8773; www.templeofthai.com). Purchase **cardamom extract** from Silver Cloud Estates ($11.25 for a 4-ounce bottle; 410/484-4526; www.silvercloudestates.com) and **cardamom leaves** from Green Meadow Farm ($2 for a bag of 12 leaves; 717/442-5222; www.glennbrendle.com). To make the cardamom chicken curry (see page 66), use **Kashmiri chile powder**, available from Kalustyan's ($6 for a 2.5-ounce jar; see above).

Taipei

To make the garlic chives with pork (see page 81), purchase **garlic chive flower buds** from Melissa's/World Variety Produce (prices vary by availability; see above) and **dried fermented black beans** from Ethnic Foods Company ($3 for a 7-ounce bag; look for "salted black beans"; 952/593-3000; www.ethnicfoodsco.com). To make the sour fried pork cutlets (see page 81), use **hong zao paste** from Verano's Pantry ($6.75 for a 9.9-ounce jar; look for "Anka paste"; 206/905-9306; www.veranospantry.com), **mushroom powder** from Pistol River Mushroom Farm ($3.50 for a 2.5-ounce jar; 877/491-9195; www.pistolrivermushrooms.com), and **sweet potato starch** from Ethnic Foods Company ($2.99 for a 14-ounce bag; see above). To prepare the steamed fish with ginger and scallions (see page 81), use michiu **Chinese cooking wine** from MyEthnicWorld.com ($4 for a 20-ounce bottle; 708/267-2687; www.myethnicworld.com). To make the stewed pork over rice (see page 82), purchase **dried shrimp** from ImportFood.com ($4.89 for a 3-ounce pack; 888/618-8424; www.importfood.com), **dried scallops** from Hsu's Ginseng Enterprises, Inc. ($20 for an 8-ounce bag; 800/826-1577; www.hsuginseng.com), **soybean paste** from Pacific Rim Gourmet ($5 for a 20-ounce bottle; www.amazon.com), and Chinese **rock sugar** from Kalustyan's ($6 for an 8-ounce pack; see above). To make the pork and chive dumplings (see page 83), buy **black vinegar** from Ethnic Foods Company ($6 for a 20-ounce bottle; see above).

Sweepstakes

For the chance to win one of three **Zojirushi Induction Heating System rice cookers**, enter the "Zojirushi" sweepstakes, sponsored by SAVEUR, at www.saveur.com/win, between March 9 and April 2, 2010. Contest open to residents of the United States and District of Columbia ages 18 and older. No purchase necessary; void where prohibited by law. For complete official rules, see our website.

Correction

The recipe for Swiss onion tart that appeared on page 34 of our December 2009 issue was given to us by cookbook author Nick Malgieri.

TODD COLEMAN (3)

The paper used for this magazine comes from certified forests that are managed in a sustainable way to meet the social, economic, and environmental needs of present and future generations. PEFC PEFC/29-31-75

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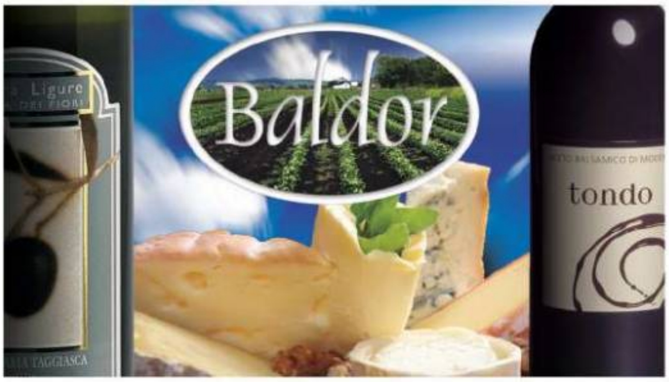

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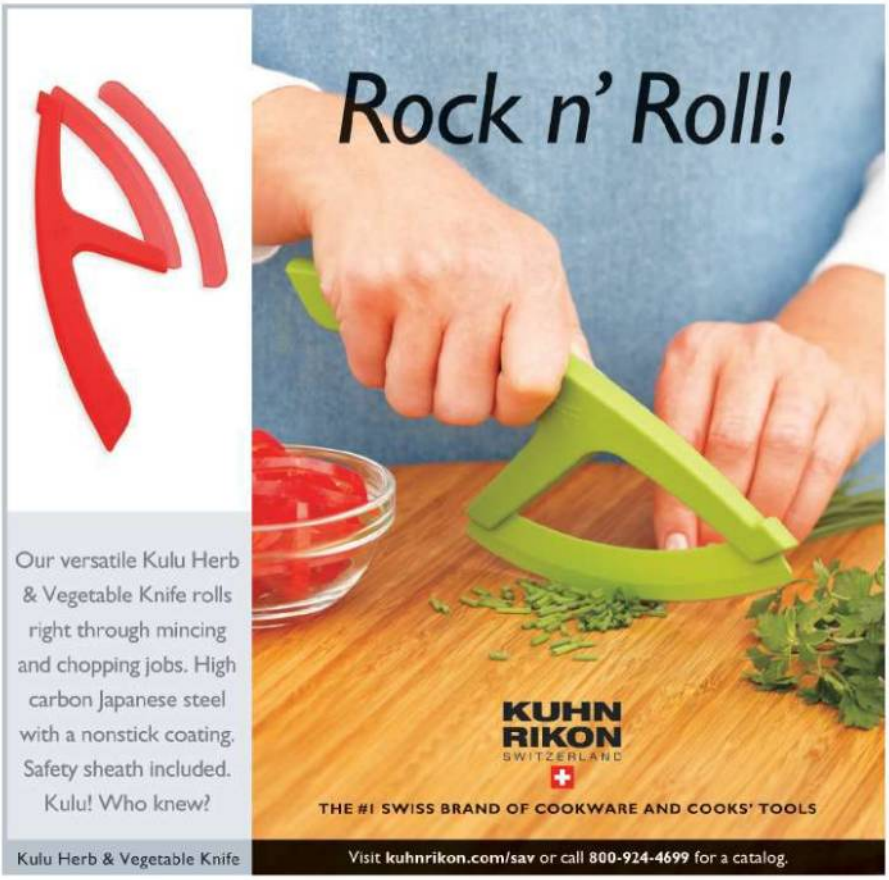

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MOMENT

TIME 1:00 P.M., July 13, 2002

PLACE Gateshead, United Kingdom

The Berlin-based artists known as Eva & Adele (Eva is at left), pictured above at the opening event of the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art in northern England, demonstrate that living works of art must eat, too.

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARTIN PARR/MAGNUM PHOTOS

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